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The Concept of Character in the Apocalypse with Implications for Character Education

Beatrice S. Neall
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ABSTRACT

THE CONCEPT OF CHARACTER IN THE APOCALYPSE
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by

Beatrice S. Neall

Chairman: John B. Youngberg

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Dissertation

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Title: THE CONCEPT OF CHARACTER IN THE APOCALYPSE: WITH IMPLICATIONS FOR CHARACTER EDUCATION

Name of researcher: Beatrice S. Neall

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Problem and Purpose

In the educational world of the 80s there is a renewed interest in moral education after nearly half a century of neglect. However, since most moral philosophers reject the teaching of objective moral values in favor of subjectivity, Christian educators have felt the need to restate the principles of character education to harmonize with biblical truth. This study analyzes the concept of character in the Apocalypse against a background of humanistic philosophy originating in Plato and Aristotle, noting in each system the concepts regarding the norm of character, the nature of man, the nature of good and evil, and the method of character development.

Findings

The biblical view of character differs from that of the philosophers in that the concepts of man and values are tied to the character of God. Thus, in the Apocalypse man is seen as created in the image of God to reflect the character of God, which is the norm from which are derived the concepts of good and evil. Evil character is hostility to God; righteous character means exalting God and being loyal to Him to death. Character is developed through participation in Christ's legal victory over sin at the cross, followed by experiential victory through union with Christ. Character in the last days will be tested over the issue of worship, whether to a pseudo-Christian power or to God. Judgment is Christocentric, depending upon one's treatment of the Lamb.

Since the philosophers, by contrast, lacked the "solar" concept of a personal God, they drove the "satellite" concepts of man and values from their courses into darkness. Centuries of philosophical dialectic have deprived man of "soul," "essence," eternity, freedom, and even mind, so that educational goals have been reduced to problem-solving, social adjustment, self-actualization, and moral autonomy. These limited goals may be responsible for the academic and moral crises facing public schools in America today.

Conclusions

This research concludes that it is only in the framework of the God-man relationship that man can find his origin and destiny, malady and remedy, meaning and values, and a character that reflects the character of God.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It was on the shores of West Malaysia overlooking the South China Sea—with the "sound of many waters" in the background—that I first was inspired to make a serious study of the book of Revelation. There under the angsana trees on a quiet Sabbath away from the pressures of mission duties in Singapore, Dr. Edward Heppenstall challenged my husband and me to wrestle with that book—to pray earnestly for guidance in order to wrest from it more of its treasures. Preliminary studies with the aid of a notebook and concordance yielded such rewarding insights that a desire was created for further study. Three years later, in 1975, as I began working on my doctoral program, I expressed the desire to do my research in the Apocalypse. One problem quickly surfaced—how to make it relevant to the field of education. Did the Apocalypse, in fact, have a message for the educational world of the late twentieth century? Four summers of work on John's extraordinary document made it evident that the Apocalypse does indeed contribute to the search for moral foundations in character education. At a time when the American educational system is experiencing a severe moral crisis, the voice of the ancient prophet comes ringing across the centuries to those who have drunk at the fountains of human philosophy and found them bitter—"Let him who is thirsty come, let him who desires take the water of life without price" (Rev 8:10-11; 22:17).

Thanks are due to many who helped bring this work to fruition:

To my committee--John Youngberg, William Johnsson, George Akers, and Hans LaRondelle--who, while plowing through reams of copy, steered me off the detours back onto the track; along with Thomas Blincoe, Kenneth Strand, and Edward Heppenstall, who with my committee provided inspiration through their scholarship and spirituality

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To my dear husband who never had the convenience of a secretary-wife--but only a rival for the typewriter instead--yet who encouraged, prodded, or tranquilized me as needed, always giving strong masculine support

Last and most, to the Lord who often drew near as I struggled with His Word, revealing insights that I found precious; who repeatedly assured me that He would see me through--and did!

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In the educational world of the 80s there is a renewed interest in moral education after several decades of neglect.

Moral education in public schools was largely discontinued from 1940 to 1960 because conventional, didactic, ethical instruction was thought to have little effect upon moral behavior. Supporting this view was Freud's theory that a child's moral and personal values were acquired by the age of five, after which few fundamental changes could be expected in the child's basic personality. Such a view fostered the belief that character education during the school years would exert little influence.[1]

The research of Hartshorne and May also discouraged efforts to teach morality in the school. Experimental tests of honesty (regarding cheating, lying, and stealing) revealed that students' verbal moral values about honesty had little correlation with how they acted, and that cheating was distributed in a bell-curve around a level of moderate cheating.[2] They concluded that "character-building" agencies, such as church, school, and Scouts, were not nearly as effective as had

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[1] Nicholas J. Anastasiow, Contributing Consultant (and others), Educational Psychology: A Contemporary View (Del Mar Calif.: CRM Books, 1973), p. 125.

[2] Ibid., p. 126. See also Hugh Hartshorne and Mark A. May, Studies in Deceit (New York: Macmillan, 1928), pp. 386, 407-414.

been supposed. Most educators and psychologists reacted to these findings by turning away from this complex area of human behavior.[1]

The pluralistic nature of American society also made it difficult to teach any particular set of values, especially after the Supreme Court ruled in 1962 against prayer in the public schools. To avoid controversy, schools began to stand for nothing, while teachers turned to "teaching the facts" rather than values.[2]

During this same period emphasis was on "life adjustment" to the detriment of intellectual and moral concerns. This approach maintained neutrality on ethical issues, stressing instead the development of the student as a well-adjusted member of society.[3] While the Sputnik crisis in 1957 provoked a return to intellectual goals, the stress was on technology and skills rather than the humanities and character development.[4]

But grave problems in American society caused a renewal of interest in moral education. The chaotic conditions of the 60s, with race riots, anti-war demonstrations, hostility to the "establishment," and the breakdown of morality in government, pointed to a missing factor in American education. At the same time complex moral issues never before faced in human society were introduced by sophisticated

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[1]Robert F. Peck with Robert J. Havighurst, The Psychology of Character Development (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1960), p. vi.

[2]Louis E. Raths, Merrill Harmin, and Sidney B. Simon, Values and Teaching (Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Pub. Co., 1966), p. 20.

[3]Anastasiow, Educational Psychology, p. 125.

[4]C. M. Beck, B. S. Crittenden, and E. V. Sullivan, eds., Moral Education: Interdisciplinary Approaches (New York: Newman Press, 1971), p. 5.

technology, raising questions about such ideas as "the right to life," "the right to die," access of minors to contraceptives, and the morality of genetic engineering. Beginning in the 60s a new wave of interest in moral education swept the country.

Yet the present character-education movement is uncertain of its theory and unsure of its direction. Anyone who studies the moral philosophers for guidance discovers that they disagree profoundly among themselves.[1]

A behaviorist like B. F. Skinner believes that moral learning can be taught by proper schedules of reinforcement. He envisages a society in which an elite group controls the behavior of the masses.[2] Behaviorist A. Bandura believes that imitative learning through exposure to appropriate social models is one of the most important ways in which a child is socialized to moral values.[3] A Freudian speaks of the importance of the balance of parental love with firmness to promote superego identification. But cognitivist Lawrence Kohlberg disparages Freudian and behaviorist views that virtue can be taught. He professes not to know what virtue is.[4] His approach is to teach moral reasoning by drawing out of the developing structures of the mind, in Socratic fashion, the innate capacities inherent in it. He believes that right

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[1]William Frankena, "Toward a Philosophy of Moral Education," in Moral Education, Barry I. Chazan and Jonas F. Soltis, eds. (New York: Teachers College Press, Columbia University, 1973), p. 152.

[2]B. F. Skinner, Beyond Freedom and Dignity (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1971), pp. 145-183.

[3]Anastasiow, Educational Psychology, p. 134.

[4]Lawrence Kohlberg, "Moral Development and the Education of Adolescents," in Adolescents: Readings in Behavior and Development, Ellis D. Evans, ed. (Hinsdale, Ill.: Dryden Press, 1970), p. 178.

reasoning leads to right action. He would agree with Plato that to understand justice is to practice it.[1]

A significant trend in moral education today is to reject, with Kohlberg, the conventional assumption that morality is a specific set of values and behaviors to be transmitted to the young.[2] Indoctrination of predetermined values, teaching a "bag of virtues"--including cultural or religious dogma as unquestioned wisdom, imposing rules and regulations, and holding up "great" people as models--are all traditional approaches which smack of authoritarianism.[3] The objective, rather, is to teach a child to make his own moral judgments, to discover his own values, to determine what works best for him. The goal of moral education is not autonomy per se, but autonomy within the context of disciplined moral thinking.[4]

While current moral philosophy assumes that there are moral principles which can govern specific situations, there is no unanimity as to the nature of any particular moral principle.[5] There is more agreement on the importance of moral principles to moral life than on their specific form and nature. Generally, moral principles are recognized as valid, not on the basis of their divine origin but in their rationality and human value. They may be recognized as binding in one society but not in another; thus they are culturally relative. Or they

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[1] Idem, "The Child as a Moral Philosopher," Psychology Today (September 1968):30.

[2] Chazan and Soltis, Moral Education, p. 8.

[3] Kohlberg, "Moral Development," p. 179. See also Raths et al., Values and Teaching, pp. 39-41.

[4] Chazan and Soltis, Moral Education, pp. 113-114.

[5] Ibid., p. 10.

may be regarded as prescriptive statements to act as a guide in moral situations, but having no binding force until the agent decides to make it binding upon himself. A moral agent thus creates his own moral principles.[1]

How can morality be taught when there is no agreement on the moral principles to be taught? One solution is to avoid objectivity by teaching each individual to discover his subjective moral values. Moral educators are currently seeking "a content-free methodology of morals";[2] that is, they teach method (how to reason on moral issues, how to discover one's personal values) rather than content (objective moral standards).

Christian education has always been concerned with character development. However, there are significant differences between secular and religious approaches that need to be identified. The assumptions upon which secular moral philosophies are built are incompatible with assumptions based upon revealed religion. Some of these are:

1. The man-centered approach of deriving values and moral principles from the nature of man rather than the God-centered approach of deriving both the nature of man and morality from God.

2. The subjective nature of morality (moral relativity) as opposed to objective, absolute moral standards.

3. The humanistic viewpoint of man's self-sufficiency which rules out the supernatural as the agent of character change. (The goal

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Beck, et al., Moral Education: Interdisciplinary Approaches, p. 13.

of autonomous man stands in radical contradiction to the Christian goal of total dependence upon God.)

4. The emphasis on method, rather than content, in moral education. (Christian education has a body of content, the Word of God, to impart.)

5. The goal of education as a healthy adjustment to one's environment. (In the biblical view, the Christian must orient his life toward the kingdom of God and the coming of Christ.)

Christian education has dimensions not conceived of in secular education. Its goal for the individual is not merely self-actualization or well-adjusted personality but likeness to God. Its purpose is nothing less than the restoration of the image of God in man. "Beloved, we are God's children now; . . . we know that when he appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is" (1 Jn 3:2).[1]

Statement of the Problem

In view of the current revival of interest in character education and the incompatibility of secular theories with biblical principles and presuppositions, there is need to formulate a Christian theory of character development.

In recognition of this need, the Center for Studies and Services in Education at Andrews University has initiated the "Project for Studies in Character Development" for the purpose of doing theoretical research and developing curricular materials on character development. A major objective is to formulate a theory of character development

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[1]The Revised Standard Version of the Bible is used in this dissertation unless otherwise indicated.

based on the teachings of the Bible, the writings of E. G. White, and selected concepts of the behavioral sciences. For biblical input, the plan is to divide the Bible into sections among various researchers for intensive study of what it teaches about character development.[1]

This dissertation, "The Concept of Character In the Apocalypse: With Implications for Character Education," will feed into the "Project for Studies in Character Development" as a part of the biblical input.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to analyze the teaching of the book of Revelation regarding character in order to contribute to a Christian perspective of moral education against a background of secular systems of thought.

It is appropriate to select the Apocalypse for this research for the following reasons:

1. As a part of Scripture, it is one of the documents from which Christian moral philosophy is derived.

2. There is a widespread fascination with the book of Revelation because of its apocalyptic view of the end of the world and the imminence of the *parousia*.

3. Revelation is crisis-oriented. It describes the conflicts, struggles, and cataclysms that rock society in the age preceding the *parousia*. Its prophecies indicate that the task of Christian education is to prepare a people for life, not in a well-ordered, ever-improving, utopian society, but in a chaotic, disordered society so hostile to

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[1] John B. Youngberg, "The Formulation and Preliminary Application of a Theory of Character Development," Center for Studies and Services in Education, Project for Studies in Character Development, Andrews University, 1974, pp. 1-2.

divine rule that it finally erupts into the world-wide battle of Armageddon (Rev 16:14-16; 19:19).

Christian educators should have a clear understanding of the kind of character needed to face earth's final crisis. The book of Revelation describes such a crisis and such a character. It was the purpose of this study to delineate in a systematic way the nature of that character and the way in which it is developed. The study also presents implications from the Apocalypse for character education today.

Questions Answered

This research was concerned with the following questions:

1. What is the nature of man as presented in the Apocalypse? Is he basically good or evil or neutral? Is he determined or free?

2. What is the norm of character in the Apocalypse? Is it based upon man's inherent nature or upon a source external to man? How is the character of God described?

3. How are good and evil character described in the Apocalypse? How does each relate to self, the world, and God?

4. How is a righteous character developed? Is it a divine or human enterprise, or both? What aids has God provided for character development? What motivations are appealed to in the development of character? Against what obstacles or in what circumstances must character be developed?

5. What are the goals of character development? Is absolute moral perfection set forth as the goal to be reached by all Christians or by a select group only (such as the 144,000)? Is the coming of Christ's kingdom seen as contingent upon character development in the

saints? Is character development a prerequisite for salvation? Does it then become the means of salvation?

6. How is character evaluated? By what standard is it judged as good or evil? Who is the judge and who take part in the judgment? Is character evaluated on the basis of deeds or disposition? What rewards and punishments accrue from good or evil character?

7. What was the philosophical milieu of the age in which John wrote his Apocalypse? How does the concept of character in the Apocalypse compare with representative philosophies of the time (in this study limited to Platonism and Aristotelianism)?

8. What implications does the study of character in the Apocalypse have for Christian education in the 80s? How might the ideals presented therein be internalized in the lives of Christian youth?

Presuppositions

This research was based upon the following presuppositions:

1. That the Bible is the self-revelation of God; that as such it answers the ultimate questions of man regarding his origin, purpose, and destiny; that it provides the solution to the problem of evil in human character.

2. That moral law is rooted in the eternal nature of God; that there are absolute moral principles binding upon all men; that these have been specified in the two-fold law of love (Dt 6:4-5; Lev 19:18; cf. Lk 10:27), the Ten Commandments (Ex 20:3-17), the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5-7), and other portions of Scripture.

3. That the book of Revelation is the authentic and trustworthy production of one author. (Previous attempts at literary

dissection have no support from the manuscript tradition.[1] Also the "careful composition and startling coherence" as well as the "compelling theological conception" of the book show it to be a unified work by a single author.[2])

4. That the book of Revelation has significance for society today. H. H. Rowley believes that apocalyptic literature is relevant for its view that God is in control of history, that history has a goal,[3] that the goal is the end of the world[4] and the coming of Christ,[5] that there will be a great Assize at the end of history when men and nations are arraigned at the bar of God,[6] and that there is a hope of heaven.[7] It is not necessary to concede with Rowley that the prophecies of the Advent in John's Apocalypse failed,[8] though undoubtedly time has extended longer than the Revelator envisioned. According to the "day-for-a-year" principle of the historical school of interpretation,[9] the prophecies of Revelation extend to modern times which constitute "the time of the end."[10] Accepted in this light, the message of the Apocalypse, with its warning of a great eschatological

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[1]André Feuillet, The Apocalypse (Staten Island, N.Y.: Alba House, 1965), p. 331.

[2]Elizabeth S. Fiorenza, "Revelation, Book of," Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1976), Supplementary Volume, p. 744 (hereafter cited as IDB).

[3]H. H. Rowley, The Relevance of Apocalyptic (New York: Harper & Bros., 1946), p. 152.

[4]Ibid., p. 156. [5]Ibid., p. 148. [6]Ibid., p. 174.

[7]Ibid. [8]Ibid., p. 157.

[9]Desmond Ford, "Appendix F—The Year-Day Principle," Daniel (Nashville: Southern Pub. Assn., 1978), pp. 300-305.

[10]Dan 8:17, 19; 11:35, 40; 12:1, 4; Mt 24:6, 14, 21; Rev 2:26; 7:14.

tribulation which will test the moral fiber of all people, becomes exceedingly relevant for the world today.

5. That the Apocalypse is an ethical book and thus speaks to the question of character development, though apocalyptic is said to be more concerned with eschatology than with ethics.[1] It is generally assumed that prophetic literature (e.g., Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Amos) is ethically active because it denounces the evil of God's people and demands reformation, whereas apocalyptic literature (e.g., Daniel and Revelation) is ethically passive because it assumes that God's people are righteous while the world is so evil there is no hope for it but to be destroyed. As an apocalyptic book, the Revelation should then be ethically passive. Certain scholars have pointed out, however, that in its ethical concern the book bears more resemblance to prophetic literature than apocalyptic. It contains "denunciations of evil and exhortations to pure and noble living";[2] it does not assume the righteousness of God's people but exhorts them to repent;[3] the awful judgments on the wicked world are intended to bring it to repentance.[4] The Apocalypse thus has a great moral purpose,[5] making it a suitable source for a study of character.

This research was further based upon these hermeneutical principles:

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[1]Martin Rist, "Apocalypticism," IDB 1:161; see also Leon Morris, Apocalyptic (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), pp. 58-59.

[2]David Hill, "Prophecy and Prophets in the Revelation of St. John," New Testament Studies 18 (1972):401-402.

[3]George Eldon Ladd, "The Revelation and Jewish Apocalyptic," The Evangelical Quarterly 29 (1957):99-100.

[4]Ibid.

[5]Ibid.

1. The historical system of interpretation was assumed because it sees in Revelation an outline of the course of history from John's day to the eschaton. Preterism, which applies the prophecies to the age in which the author wrote, must assert that the parousia failed to occur as prophesied, or that it has only a spiritual fulfillment.[1] Futurism, on the other hand, projects the prophecies into a short period at the end of time, thus making a vast lacuna of the Christian age with little significance for it in the prophetic scheme. It thus appears that the historicist view is truest to the nature of apocalyptic literature which purports to outline history in a straight-line continuum from the time of the author until the end of the age.[2]

2. The book of Revelation, in common with other New Testament Scripture, considers the church to be God's people rather than literal Israel.[3] Hence, the 144,000 sealed from the twelve tribes of Israel refers not to literal Israel but to the church, or a special part of it.[4]

3. Persons may be typical, as Adam is a type of Christ and

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[1]G. B. Caird, A Commentary on the Revelation of St. John the Divine (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), p. 19. It is noteworthy that Jesus did not take a preteristic view of Daniel but considered the "abomination of desolation" as a destructive power yet in the future (Mt 24:14). Similarly Paul and John the Revelator applied Daniel's prophecies to the future (2 Th 2:1-12; Rev 13).

[2]Kenneth A. Strand, Perspectives in the Book of Revelation: Essays on Apocalyptic Interpretation (Worthington, Ohio: Ann Arbor Publishers, 1975), pp. 24-28.

[3]See Mt 21:43; 1 Pet 2:9; Rom 2:28-29; Gal 3:28-29; also Ford, Daniel, p. 53.

[4]George Eldon Ladd, A Commentary on the Revelation of St. John (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), pp. 114-116.

Abraham is the father and type of all who believe.[1] Hence, in Revelation names such as Balaam, Jezebel, and Israel may have symbolic meaning suggested by their characters as portrayed in the Old Testament.

4. In the transition from Old Testament terminology to New Testament application, words with local meaning may take on world-wide significance. Hence Jerusalem and Babylon are no longer local cities but symbols of the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. The Apocalypse is cosmic rather than national in scope.[2] Similarly, much of the prophetic description of the future is in the language of past, historical events.[3] Exodus language from the Egyptian and Babylonian captivities is frequently applied to the church.[4]

5. The prophecies of Revelation are Christ-centered and have a moral purpose concerned with the redemptive plan of God for mankind.[5]

Rationale

The topic "The Concept of Character in the Apocalypse" was chosen because of the need for a biblical orientation to character theory at a time when secular theories are commanding widespread attention.

The Apocalypse was selected for this research because it is one

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[1]Bernard Ramm, Protestant Biblical Interpretation: A Textbook of Hermeneutics (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1970), pp. 231-232.

[2]Desmond Ford, "The Abomination of Desolation in Biblical Eschatology" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Manchester, 1972), p. 308.

[3]Ramm, Protestant Biblical Interpretation, p. 247.

[4]See Rev 12:14; 15:2-3; 18:2, 4 for examples.

[5]Ramm, Protestant Biblical Interpretation, pp. 267-268.

of the documents from which Christian moral philosophy is derived and because of its relevance to the church today.

The subject of character in the Apocalypse was considered against the background of two thought systems contemporary to John's day: Platonism and Aristotelianism. These two systems were chosen for the following reasons:

1. They were part of the milieu in which John wrote the Revelation. Some theologians see Platonic influences on the New Testament itself, though Hebrew influence is more certain.[1] It seems clear that John and Paul refuted Platonic concepts in their writings.[2]

2. Plato and Aristotle represent two basic philosophies--Idealism and Realism; Plato based his norm for goodness upon the Ideas, and Aristotle upon the nature of man himself.[3] These two philosophies have molded Western thought systems, both secular and religious, through the ages. Hence many of the basic issues debated in John's day still have relevance in the twentieth century.

Delimitations

This study was limited to the subject of character in the Apocalypse and touches upon other issues--historical, prophetic, or theological--only as they relate to the subject of character.

Only two of the Greek philosophies were chosen for a background

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[1]George Eldon Ladd, A Theology of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), pp. 229-236, 457-466.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Samuel Enoch Stumpf, Philosophy: History and Problems (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1971), p. 105.

to the Apocalypse, having been selected because of their great influence on secular and religious thought through the centuries.

Definition of Terms

Apocalypse — The last book of the Bible, also called "The Revelation to John," or "Revelation." It is derived from the Greek apokalypsis, meaning "revelation, disclosure."[1]

Apocalyptic — Used in this paper with a capital A, it means "having to do with the Apocalpyse." In the lower case it refers to a body of Jewish and Christian literature characterized by an eschatological belief in two opposing cosmic powers--God and Satan; two distinctive ages--the present evil age and the future age under God's rule; symbolic imagery; etc.[2]

Character — From the Greek charaktēr, a graving tool, a mark engraved, an impress or character; from the stem of charassein, to engrave, which probably derives from the Hebrew hārash: he engraved, plowed.[3] Other meanings were a die, stamp; a mark engraved, an impress or stamp on coins or seals: pl. letter, brand; distinctive mark or token impressed on a person or thing by which it is known from others, characteristic.[4] Figuratively, it came to mean a feature, trait, or characteristic; an essential peculiarity; mental or moral constitution;[5] the combination of properties, qualities, or peculiarities which distinguishes one person or thing, or one group of persons or things, from others; specifically, it is the sum of the inherited and acquired ethical

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[1]Walter Bauer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, trans. and adapt. of 4th rev. and aug. ed., 1952, by William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957), s.v. "apokalypsis."

[2]M. Rist, "Apocalypticism," IDB 1:157.

[3]Ernest Klein, A Comprehensive Etymological Dictionary of the English Language (1966), s.v. "character."

[4]H. G. Liddell and R. Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1925), s.v. "charaktēr."

[5]C. T. Onions, ed., Oxford Universal English Dictionary (1937), s.v. "character."

traits which give to a person his moral individuality.[1] Thus character is a pattern of acts, rather consistent through life, which may be said to characterize and define the human individual, based on the inward elements of motivation and intent.[2]

Eschatology — From the Greek eschaton, meaning "the last thing." Eschatology is the doctrine of the last things, such as the end of the world, the second coming of Christ, resurrection, judgment, and the new age.[3] The eschaton is the last age.

Exegesis — Explanation or critical interpretation of a text.[4] Some of the tasks of exegesis are to determine the meaning and grammatical use of words, to understand the historical environment in which the document was written and the circumstances to which the author addressed himself,[5] and to explain the logical progression of thought.

Humanistic — Used in this research, it means anthropocentric, man-centered.

Parousia — A Greek word meaning presence, coming, or advent.[6] It is a technical term for the second coming of Christ.

Systems of Interpretation:

Preterist — A system viewing the apocalyptic prophecies as having a contemporary or near-contemporary fulfillment.[7] The evil powers mentioned in the Apocalypse referred to

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[1]William D. Whitney, ed., The Century Dictionary and Cyclopedia, 10 vols. (1904), 2:927.

[2]Peck and Havighurst, Psychology of Character Development, pp. 1-2.

[3]Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary (1969), s.v. "eschatology."

[4]Ibid., s.v. "exegesis."

[5]Samuel Macauley Jackson, ed., The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge (1909), s.v. "exegesis or hermeneutics."

[6]Bauer, Greek-English Lexicon, s.v. "parousia."

[7]Desmond Ford, Daniel (Nashville: Southern Pub. Assn., 1978), p. 65.

imperial Rome. The prophecies about the overthrow of Rome by the kingdom of God failed to materialize.[1]

Historical — A method viewing Revelation as a symbolic prophecy of the entire history of the church until the return of Christ and the end of the age. The numerous symbols of the book designate various historical movements and events in the Western world and the Christian church.[2]

Futurist — A method interpreting Revelation largely as a prophecy of future events depicted in symbolic terms leading up to and accompanying the end of the world. The primary purpose of the book of Revelation is to describe the consummation of God's redemptive purpose and the end of the age.[3]

Idealist — A method avoiding the problem of trying to find any historical fulfillment of the symbols of Revelation and seeing only a symbolic portrayal of the spiritual cosmic conflict between the kingdom of God and the powers of satanic evil.[4]

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[1] Ladd, Revelation, p. 11.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid., p. 13.

[4] Ibid.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A review of literature showed that no single work, whether dissertation, article, or book,[1] developed the theme of character in the Apocalypse. However, since the subject under consideration can be broken up into a spectrum of subtopics, many of which have received scholarly treatment, there was much literature which contributed to this research.

A study parallel to this one, also contributing to the "Project for Studies in Character Development" but researching a different body of literature, is John M. Fowler's dissertation, "The Concept of Character Development in the Writings of Ellen G. White."[2] This study was valuable for its conceptual framework, much of which could be applied to the book of Revelation.

For the original text of the Apocalypse, The Greek New Testament, edited by Kurt Aland et al.,[3] was used, supplemented by Bruce

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[1]The following sources were examined: Comprehensive Dissertation Index, 1861-1972, 1973-1975 Supplements (Ann Arbor, Mich.: Xerox University Microfilms, 1973-1975; Dissertation Abstracts International, 37 vols. (Ann Arbor, Mich.: Xerox University Microfilms, 1975-1976); New Testament Abstracts (Cambridge, Mass.: Weston College School of Theology, 1956-1975); Ibid., s.v. "Book Reviews," and other bibliographies.

[2](Ed.D. dissertation, Andrews University, 1977).

[3](United Bible Societies [Stuttgart, West Germany: Würtemberg Bible Society], 1975).

Metzger's A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament[1] for consideration of variant readings. Standard Greek and Hebrew lexicons were consulted.[2]

Rowley, Russell, Hanson, Morris, and Strand's works on apocalyptic are important for an understanding of the nature of the literary vehicle used by John.[3] The best structural studies of Revelation appear to be those by Bowman and Strand.[4] Bowman believes that Revelation follows the format of a Greek drama, containing seven "acts" (e.g., seven churches, seven seals, seven trumpets), each "act" containing seven "scenes" (e.g., the churches of Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, etc.) against a "backdrop" or "stage setting" from the heavenly sanctuary. This schema seems to fit well with few difficulties, though it differs in places from the chapter divisions of the book. By charting parallel expressions from opposite sections of the book, (e.g., introduction and conclusion, trumpets and plagues) Strand demonstrates quite conclusively that the book of Revelation is in the form of a chiasmus, dividing at chapter 15. He concludes that chapters 1 through 14 belong to the historical portion of the book—

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[1](United Bible Societies, 1971).

[2]Bauer, Greek-English Lexicon; Liddell and Scott, Greek-English Lexicon; Joseph Henry Thayer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (New York: American Book Co., 1886); William Gesenius, A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament, trans. Edward Robinson, ed. Francis Brown (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974).

[3]Rowley, The Relevance of Apocalyptic; D. S. Russell, The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic (London: SCM Press, 1964); Paul D. Hanson, The Dawn of Apocalyptic (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975); Leon Morris, Apocalyptic (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972); Strand, Perspectives in Revelation.

[4]J. W. Bowman, "Revelation, Book of," IDB 4:58-71; Kenneth A. Strand, Interpreting the Book of Revelation (Worthington, Ohio: Ann Arbor Publishers, 1976).

spanning the centuries from John's day to the eschaton--while chapters 15 to 22 deal only with end-time events clustered around the parousia. These structural presuppositions are crucial in the interpretation of certain passages.

Dictionary articles on key words--such as "fear," "love," "faith," "sin," "name," "mark," "seal," "fornication," "judgment"--proved invaluable for this research. The theological dictionaries explain the use of each word in the Greek culture, followed by its use in Old Testament, Intertestamental, and New Testament periods.[1] The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible also provided excellent articles on general topics such as apocalyptic, faith, sin, and righteousness.[2]

Articles in theological journals cited in New Testament Abstracts constituted another fertile field for research in the book of Revelation. These articles dealt with various themes of the Apocalypse such as Christology,[3] kingly priesthood,[4] judgment,[5] the seven

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[1]Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, eds., Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, 10 vols., trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964-1976) (hereafter cited as TDNT); Colin Brown, ed., The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975).

[2]George Buttrick, ed., The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962).

[3]Robert H. Mounce, "The Christology of the Apocalypse," Foundations 11 (Jan.-Mar. 1968):42-51; Norman Hillyer, "'The Lamb' in the Apocalypse," The Evangelical Quarterly 39:228-236.

[4]W. H. Brownlee, "The Priestly Character of the Church in the Apocalypse," New Testament Studies 5 (1958-1959):224-225; A. Feuillet, "Les Chrétiens Prêtres et Rois d'après l'Apocalypse," Revue Thomiste 75 (1975):40-66; A. Gelston, "The Royal Priesthood," The Evangelical Quarterly 131 (July-Sept. 1959):152-163.

[5]John A. Bollier, "Judgment in the Apocalypse," Interpretation 7 (1953):14-17; Robert L. Thomas, "The Imprecatory Prayers of the Apocalypse," Bibliotheca Sacra 126 (Jan.-Mar. 1969):123-131.

churches,[1] symbolisms,[2] and witness.[3]

Larger studies on specific subjects also contributed to this research. Desmond Ford's dissertation traced the Antichrist motif to its Danielic source, showing how the synoptic writers, Paul, and John, developed the theme in their writings.[4] Walter Schmithals' book supports the conclusion that the Nicolaitan problem afflicting the churches of Rev 2 can be identified as the same incipient Gnosticism which Paul refuted in his letters to the Corinthians.[5] Hans Jonas' standard work on Gnosticism further clarifies the nature of that religion.[6] A. T. Hanson's book on the wrath of God in the Apocalypse concludes that divine wrath is not a personal emotion of God, but an impersonal process of retribution resulting from the rejection of

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[1]A. C. Repp, "Ministry and Life in the Seven Churches," Concordia Theological Monthly 25 (March 1964):133-147; M. J. S. Rudwick and E. M. B. Green, "Laodicean Lukewarmness," Expository Times 69 (March 1958):176-178.

[2]A. J. Bandstra, "Jerusalem and Rome in the Apocalypse," Calvin Theological Journal 1 (April 1966):67-69; D. E. Aune, "St. John's Portrait of the Church in the Apocalypse," Evangelical Quarterly 38 (March 1966):131-149; J. E. Burns, "Contrasted Women of Apocalypse 12 and 17," Catholic Biblical Quarterly 26 (October 1964):459-463; R. Devine, "The Virgin Followers of the Lamb," Scripture 16 (1964):1-5.

[3]James Du Preez, "Mission Perspective in the Book of Revelation," Evangelical Quarterly 42 (March 1970):152-167; Allison A. Trites, "Martus and Martyrdom in the Apocalypse: A Semantic Study," Novum Testamentum 15 (1973):72-80.

[4]Ford, "Abomination of Desolation."

[5]Walter Schmithals, Gnosticism in Corinth: An Investigation of the Letters to the Corinthians, trans. John E. Steely (Nasnville, Abingdon Press, 1971); cf. Elizabeth S. Fiorenza, "Apocalyptic and Gnosis in the Book of Revelation and Paul," Journal of Biblical Literature 92 (April 1973):565-581.

[6]Hans Jonas, The Gnostic Religion: The Message of the Alien God and the Beginnings of Christianity (Boston: Beacon Press, 1958).

Christ, which works itself out in the course of history.[1] Perhaps the most comprehensive work on the subject of witness is Trites' study which shows that the word throughout Scripture is based upon the imagery of the lawcourt.[2] Boice has made a similar study of witness in the book of John.[3]

The numerous commentaries on the book of Revelation show the continuing interest which this book inspires. Old classics, such as those by Swete and Lenski,[4] work closely with the Greek text. Charles, Caird, and Kiddle[5] set the book against its context in the ancient world. Ladd, Mounce, and Morris[6] show a theological concern. Minear seems to have the best understanding of the "vertical dimension" of apocalyptic literature—the spiritual world of good and evil superimposed upon the physical world.[7] Other valuable commentaries are

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[1]Anthony T. Hanson, The Wrath of the Lamb, (London: S.P.C.K., 1957).

[2]Allison A. Trites, The New Testament Concept of Witness (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

[3]James M. Boice, Witness and Revelation in the Gospel of John (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970).

[4]Henry Barclay Swete, Commentary on Revelation (Grand Rapids: Kregels, 1977); R. C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of St. John's Revelation (Minneapolis: Augsburg Pub. House, 1963).

[5]R. H. Charles, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1920); Caird, Revelation; Martin Kiddle and M. K. Ross, The Revelation of St. John (Great Britain: Hodder & Stoughton, 1963).

[6]Ladd, Revelation; Robert H. Mounce, The Book of Revelation (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977); Leon Morris, The Revelation of St. John (London: Tyndale Press, 1969).

[7]Paul S. Minear, I Saw a New Earth: An Introduction to the Visions of the Apocalypse (Washington: Corpus Books, 1968).

those of Barclay, Hoeksema, Ottman, Tenney, and Hendriksen.[1]

This review of the literature reveals that few in-depth studies have been made of the theology of the Apocalypse, in comparison with the amount of material on the theologies of the synoptic, Pauline, and Johannine[2] literature. There is need to systematize the teaching of the Apocalypse with regard to the character of God, the nature of man, sin, righteousness, judgment, and eschatology. This study on the concept of character in the Apocalypse is a step in that direction.

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[1]William Barclay, The Revelation of St. John, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960); Herman Hoeksema, Behold He Cometh! An Exposition of the Book of Revelation (Grand Rapids: Reformed Free Pub. Assn., 1969); Ford C. Ottman, The Unfolding of the Ages (Fincastle, Va.: Scripture Truth Book Co., 1905); Merrill C. Tenney, Interpreting Revelation (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957); W. Hendriksen, More Than Conquerors (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1967).

[2]I.e., the gospel and epistles.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the methodology followed in the preparation of this study, the presuppositions, and the limitations.

Methodology

This research encounters a problem in describing the concept of character in Plato, Aristotle, and the Apocalypse because the word, with its English connotations, does not occur in these sources. Since it is not possible to study the word directly, it is necessary to investigate the complex of ideas associated with the word "character."

"Character" is understood here to mean the moral and ethical (to which religion adds the spiritual) aspects of personality,[1] based upon motivation and intent, and revealed outwardly in a rather consistent pattern of behavior.[2] It is seen, then, to have both internal and external (cognitive and behavioral) dimensions.

To research the concept of character, it thus becomes necessary to examine the ethics of each system of thought (the concept of good and evil) to which is tied each author's understanding of the human problem (the evil of human nature) and his proposed solution to that

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[1] Whitney, Century Dictionary, s.v. "character."

[2] Peck and Havighurst, Psychology of Character Development, pp. 1-2.

problem. The complex of ideas to be investigated thus includes the nature of man, the origin and nature of good and evil, and the method by which one overcomes evil and achieves the highest good in life. All three thought systems researched here deal directly with these basic concepts. These procedures have been followed:

1. Themes relative to the subject of character in the book of Revelation were identified and organized into a conceptual framework upon which to develop the study. The themes were suggested by the book of Revelation itself as well as by modern sources dealing with the subject of character development.

2. A detailed study of each theme within the book was made, first by compiling and then by organizing all the texts bearing upon the theme. This method allowed the whole book to shed light upon any one subject, greatly illuminating a single text or concept. In the process of compilation and interpretation, care was taken to consider context and setting to avoid distortion of meaning.

3. Parallel Scriptures in the Old and New Testaments were used to illuminate the text.

4. Short passages were exegeted.

5. Seminal words were studied using lexical aids and dictionaries.

6. Articles and commentaries were employed to explain the text.

Methodological Presuppositions

This methodology was based upon the presuppositions that:

1. Scripture is self-consistent and can therefore be used to

interpret itself.[1] The Old and New Testaments are a unity, as demonstrated by the historical and theological progression of its themes from Old to New, by the promise/fulfillment pattern from Old to New, and by the New Testament writers' use of the Old Testament in the development of their ideas.[2] Thus "the Old Testament sheds light upon the New, and the New upon the Old."[3]

The book of Revelation makes extensive use of the Old Testament, with 348 significant allusions to it.[4] It seems clear that the author of Revelation was also familiar with the New Testament itself or with early Christian traditions, and that he had access to snyoptic, Pauline, and Johannine school traditions.[5] His familiarity with Johannine materials has led Mounce and others, in harmony with early church fathers, to assert the Johannine authorship of Revelation.[6]

Thus it is not only possible but necessary to interpret John's

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[1]Ramm, Protestant Biblical Interpretation, p. 58.

[2]Gerhard F. Hasel, "The Unity of the Bible," insert in The Ministry 48 (May 1975):10-16.

[3]Ellen G. White, Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students Regarding Christian Education (Mountain View: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1943), p. 462.

[4]Tenney, Interpreting Revelation, p. 101.

[5]Charles, Revelation, 1:6. See also Elizabeth Fiorenza, "The Quest for the Johannine School: The Apocalypse and the Fourth Gospel," New Testament Studies 23 (1977):421-425; and Swete, Revelation, pp. clvi-clvii.

[6]Mounce, Revelation, pp. 30-31. Early church fathers who believed in the apostolic authorship were Justin, Hippolytus, Tertullian, Clement, and Origen (see "Revelation, Book of," IDB 4:60). Other scholars are Guthrie, Harrison, and Helmbold. See Donald Guthrie, New Testament, Introduction: Hebrews to Revelation (Chicago: Inter-Varsity Press, 1962), pp. 268-269; Everett F. Harrison, Introduction to the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), pp. 471-472; A. Helmbold, "A Note on the Authorship of the Apocalypse," New Testament Studies 8 (January 1961):77-79.

Apocalypse in the light of his sources. White states categorically, "In the Revelation all the books of the Bible meet and end."[1] In using related passages of Scripture to interpret Revelation, however, one must be aware that the author's handling of these materials is original and independent; he organizes the thought in his own fashion.[2]

2. Revelation, as apocalyptic literature, makes extensive use of symbols which in this study are interpreted by the following methods:

a. Sometimes the interpretation is explicitly stated in Scripture; in this case the interpretation seems certain.[3]

b. Careful investigation of the context may reveal that the idea corresponding to the symbol is implicit in the passage.[4]

c. On occasion the nature of the symbol may be a clue to its meaning.[5]

d. With the aid of a concordance, other passages which use the same symbol can be checked to determine whether the meaning is given.[6]

e. Comparative studies of Semitic culture may reveal the meaning of the symbol in question.[7]

3. Certain presuppositions regarding structure underlie the manner in which texts regarding events are combined to shed light upon each other. This study assumes the recapitulation rather than

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[1]White, The Acts of the Apostles (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1911), p. 585.

[2]Swete, Revelation, p. cliv; Tenney, Interpreting Revelation, p. 112.

[3]Ramm, Protestant Biblical Interpretation, p. 233.

[4]Ibid., p. 234.

[5]Ibid. [6]Ibid. [7]Ibid.

straight-line understanding of the pattern of the book. This means that sequences such as the seven churches, seven seals, and seven trumpets are seen as paralleling each other--each beginning in John's day and culminating in the eschaton--rather than following each other sequentially.[1]

Another presupposition is the sevenfold structure of the book as outlined by J. W. Bowman. According to his analysis, the Apocalypse is in the form of a Greek drama, with seven "acts" (e.g., churches, seals, trumpets, etc.), divided into seven "scenes" (e.g., Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, etc.), against a "backdrop" or "stage setting" depicting the heavenly sanctuary.[2]

An additional presupposition is the chiastic structure of the book which sees chapters 1 through 14 as historical (spanning history) while chapters 15 to 22 are assumed entirely as eschatological.[3]

Limitations

This research had the following limitations:

1. The literature investigated was limited to English and French materials, though a small amount of German was made available through a translator.

2. For primary sources, no non-canonical literature was used. The few allusions to the Pseudepigrapha cited by Charles[4] do not seem significant for this study. Swete qualifies Charles'

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[1]Strand, Interpreting Revelation, pp. 49, 53-54.

[2]"Revelation, Book of," pp. 58-71.

[3]Strand, Interpreting Revelation, p. 47.

[4]Charles, Revelation 1:lxxxii-lxxxiii.

assumption that the "writer or writers" of the Apocalypse are "steeped in Jewish apocalyptic" by stating that while the writer may have been familiar with the apocalyptic ideas of his age, he does not use extra-biblical Jewish sources with anything like the distinctness with which he refers to Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, or the sayings of Christ.[1] Ladd states that the Revelation is completely lacking in allusions to known Jewish apocalyptic writings.[2]

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[1]Swete, Revelation, p. clviii.

[2]Ladd, Revelation, p. 11.

CHAPTER IV

BACKGROUND TO CHARACTER THEORY

To understand the message of the Apocalypse with regard to character, it is helpful to view it from two perspectives: (1) within a background of humanistic thought systems, and (2) within its own biblical context. Western systems of thought, whether of philosophy, theology, psychology, or education, issue largely from two main streams, the Graeco-Roman and the Hebraeo-Christian. From the former comes a humanistic understanding of man and character; from the latter a religious understanding. Most theories of character development center in one or the other systems of thought.

The two streams have markedly different epistemologies, anthropologies, and ethical systems.

Humanistic epistemologies are built upon man's attempts to discover ultimate meaning through the human tools he has for perceiving reality, such as intuition, reason, and sense perception. In their view, man with only himself as his integration point, attempts rationally to find all knowledge, meaning and value with regard to life.[1] Biblical epistemology, however, based upon divine revelation, assumes that man cannot know his origin, purpose, or destiny unless it is revealed to him by God. It holds that the Old and New Testaments

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[1] Francis A. Schaeffer, The God Who Is There (Downer's Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 1968), p. 17.

constitute God's written revelation to man telling him who he is, where he came from, how he became involved in the human predicament, and what is the solution to his problem.

Humanistic anthropology excludes the context of God and concentrates on man in and of himself. Man is viewed as a self-enclosed unity which can exist and which can be understood by itself.[1] In the Hebraeo-Christian system, anthropology begins with theology. Man derives his existence and meaning from God, and cannot be understood apart from God.

A study of character theory must be concerned with ethical or moral standards and how they are derived. Humanistic ethical systems rely upon relative standards oriented to specific cultures[2] or individual judgment,[3] though attempts are made to discover universal principles.[4] Divine revelation purports to give absolute standards based on the nature of ultimate reality, which is the character of God Himself.

Another concern of character theory is the means by which character is developed. Humanistic theories emphasize cognition and/or behavior apart from religious experience. The biblical concept is that character is developed through personal relationship with God.

This chapter will examine the concept of character as found in two humanistic philosophies which were cotemporaneous with the intertestamental and New Testament periods, Platonism and Aristotelianism.

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[1]G. C. Berkouwer, Man: the Image of God (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), p. 33.

[2]Chazan and Soltis, Moral Education, p. 10.

[3]Ibid., pp. 113-114.

[4]Ibid., p. 9.

An overview of the biblical view of character will also be presented for purposes of comparison.

Platonism

Plato sees reality as a dualism comprised of the phenomenal world of the senses and the noumenal world of thought.[1] Behind all visible objects are eternal Ideas, Forms, or patterns, of which the visible objects are but poor copies. Earthly things—belonging to the world of becoming—change and decay; whereas the Forms—belonging to the world of being—are eternal and unchanging.[2]

Epistemology

To Plato, true knowledge is the product of reason rather than sense experience, for knowledge acquired through the senses must always be uncertain and incomplete, but reason is the faculty that discerns the pure spiritual forms which are eternal and certain.[3] He believes that all knowledge is innate in the mind, obtained by the soul in its preexistent state.[4] All learning is but recollection of the knowledge the immortal soul possessed in its previous existences.[5] The process of knowing proceeds from sense perception (which discerns visible objects), to abstract thinking (aided by a study of mathematics), to perfect intelligence, which is knowledge of the Forms and of the unity by which they are related to each other.[6]

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[1]Plato, Republic 6. 509-510. [2]Stumpf, Philosophy, p. 61.

[3]George F. Kneller, Introduction to the Philosophy of Education (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1971), p. 23.

[4]Plato, Phaedo 72-73. [5]Idem, Meno 81.

[6]Stumpf, Philosophy, pp. 56-60; Plato, Republic 6. 509-511.

God and the good

Platonism propounds an absolute moral standard, not rooted in the character of God, but in the eternal Idea of the Good, which is the highest Form. Plato's Supreme Being, the Demiurge or Craftsman, is subordinate to the Forms: he only imposes the Forms on preexisting matter, thus bringing order out of chaos.[1] He is only an intermediary between the Forms and matter, not the origin of the Forms and matter. Goodness does not originate in him.[2]

Anthropology

Plato sees man as a dualism of body and soul corresponding to the dualism of the phenomenal and noumenal worlds. He regards the body as soma-sema, the prison-house of the soul. The body is not ipso facto evil, but is a burden and hindrance to the soul. The wise man cultivates the soul so that it might rise above the body and at death escape to the world above.[3]

The soul itself is divided into three parts: reason, spirit, and appetite.[4] Reason is the awareness of goal or value; spirit is the drive to action; appetite is the desire for the things of the body.[5] Reason is the charioteer, trying to control the two horses of spirit and appetite.[6] Thus, the rational part of the soul has to control the irrational parts, the spirit and appetites.[7]

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[1]Stumpf, Philosophy, pp. 81-83.

[2]Similarly, man's nature does not derive from the nature of God but from a union of the eternal soul with matter.

[3]Ladd, Theology of NT, p. 457. [4]Plato, Republic 4. 439-441.

[5]Ibid.; Stumpf, Philosophy, p. 56.

[6]Plato, Phaedrus 246, 253-254. [7]Idem, Republic 4. 442.

The fall of man and the nature of evil

The cause of evil is inherent in the nature of the soul and its relation to the body. The rational part of the soul (reason) is created by the Demiurge, whereas the irrational parts (spirit and appetite), as well as the body, are created by the gods.[1] Since the spirit and appetites have a tendency to descend toward earth, the soul has the potential for evil even before it enters the body.[2]

The perfect soul, controlled by reason, soars upward, whereas the imperfect soul, guided by spirit and appetite, loses her wings, droops in flight, and at last settles on solid ground where she finds a home and receives an earthly frame.[3] The soul "falls," and that is how it takes on a body. Since the soul has an unruly and evil nature in its irrational parts even before it enters the body, the cause of evil is present even in its preexistent state. It is in "heaven" that the soul alternates between seeing the Forms and forgetting them--the beginning of its decline. Evil, therefore, is not a positive thing, but forgetfulness of the truth, which causes degradation to earthly things.[4]

Entrance into the body further stimulates the irrational parts of the soul, causing the reason to be subordinated to the appetites. The soul's entrance into the body, then, is a further cause of disorder or breakdown of the harmony between the various parts of the soul. The body exposes the soul to stimuli that deflect the reason from true

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[1]Idem, Timaeus 42.

[2]Stumpf, Philosophy, p. 68.

[3]Plato, Phaedrus 246.

[4]Stumpf, Philosophy, p. 68.

knowledge and prevent the reason from recalling the truth it once knew.[1]

At death each immortal soul will be judged in Hades.[2] The morally perfected soul will be allowed to return to its original dwelling place with the stars (gods); the other souls, still possessing character weaknesses, will be reincarnated in animal bodies, according to their respective failures.[3]

Concept of the good

Moral behavior will show itself in three cardinal virtues which are related to the three parts of the soul. Temperance is the virtue that controls the appetites; courage is the virtue that controls the spirit; wisdom is the virtue that controls reason.[4] When these three virtues are active, a fourth is attained, namely justice (righteousness)[5] which is perfect well-being and inner harmony. Righteousness is achieved when reason rules the spirit and appetites through self-mastery and discipline, so that a person is not at war with himself but is one harmonious whole.[6]

The larger counterpart of the soul, namely the state, operates

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[1]Ibid., pp. 68-69; Plato, Phaedo 79.

[2]Idem, Laws 9. 870; Hans K. LaRondelle, Perfection and Perfectionism (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 1971), p. 13.

[3]Ibid.; Plato, Timaeus 42; Phaedo 81-82.

[4]Idem, Republic 4. 442.

[5]The Greek dikaiosyne can be translated either justice or righteousness. When applied to the individual, the latter seems preferable.

[6]Plato, Republic 4. 443.

in the same fashion. Society is divided into three classes analogous to the parts of the soul: the artisans (appetite) who produce goods for the satisfaction of man's physical needs, the soldiers (spirit) who have the virtue of courage to protect society, and the rulers (reason) who guide society by their wisdom. Justice occurs when these three segments of society function in perfect order, each fulfilling its assigned role of ruling and being ruled.[1]

Character development

Morality for Plato consists in the recovery of man's lost inner harmony. It means reversing the process by which reason has been overcome by the appetites and the stimuli of the body. Only knowledge can produce virtue, because it is ignorance that has produced evil.[2] The way for the soul to rise again from its fall is for reason to take control of spirit and appetite and to recover its knowledge of the world of Forms--its origin and true destiny.[3] By thinking, the soul disengages itself from the body and attains to the vision of its own divine being--the remembrance of its preexistent divinity.[4] One's moral development parallels his intellectual ascent, for knowledge intensifies his love for Truth, Beauty, and Goodness. Inevitably his behavior will respond to his expanded knowledge. Thus knowledge is virtue.[5]

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[1]Ibid., 435. [2]Stumpf, Philosophy, p. 70.

[3]Ibid.; Plato, Republic 7. 517.

[4]Idem, Phaedo 72; LaRondelle, Perfection, p. 12.

[5]Stumpf, Philosophy, pp. 61, 70-71.

Summary: Platonism

In Plato's system, the physical world of body and sense is inferior to the noumenal world of the mind. Beyond the visible world of physical objects is the eternal world of the Ideas or Forms, of which earthly things are but copies. The goal of life is for the soul to return to its preexistent state of beholding the Forms, the highest of which is the Idea of the Good. Man's disordered condition is a result of the ascendancy of appetite and spirit over reason, accelerated by the entrance of the soul into the body. Evil is forgetfulness of the Forms and of an understanding of the soul's true origin and destiny, accompanied by an obsession with the pleasures of sense. To return to his highest state, man must bring his appetites and passions under the control of reason, showing in his life the cardinal virtues of wisdom, temperance, and courage. Submission to the control of reason leads to righteousness (justice) in both the individual and society. Through disciplined thinking one ascends to the knowledge of Truth, Beauty, and Goodness, which results in a life of moral excellence. Thus to Plato character development is largely a cognitive activity.

Aristotelianism

Aristotle reverses much of the philosophical system of his great teacher, Plato, thus providing a contrasting view of character and ethics.

Epistemology

While Plato holds that the intellect can receive knowledge through the vertical ascent of reason to the transcendent order above,

Aristotle rotates the vertical axis to a horizontal level. He turns from an other-worldly, idealistic view to a this-worldly, empirical view of life. Instead of beginning with universals--of which the particulars are a "shadow"--he begins with an analysis of the particulars, from which universals may be discovered.[1] Whereas Plato derives inspiration from the perfect but static and lifeless science of mathematics, Aristotle finds his philosophic base in biology, with its imperfect but living and changing organisms.[2] Aristotle denies that the soul possesses knowledge from a preexistent state; it begins from a blank condition (tabula rasa), receiving all knowledge from the senses. "There is nothing in the intellect which was not earlier in the senses."[3] Thus Aristotle finds ultimate reality not in a transcendent spiritual order, but in the empirical world of sense perception.

Anthropology

Aristotle sees man as a union of body and soul,[4] the two forming one substance, soul being the form of the body. (Form here means more than shape; it has in it shades of Plato's concept of mind, idea, and the universal. But for Aristotle form is never separate from matter.[5]) He rejects Plato's dualism of body and soul which views the

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[1]D. W. Hamlyn, "Epistemology, History of," The Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 8 vols. (1967), 3:12.

[2]Robert I. Watson, The Great Psychologists from Aristotle to Freud (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1968), p. 41.

[3]Bengt Hägglund, History of Theology (St. Louis: Concordia, 1968), pp. 179-180.

[4]Aristotle, On the Soul 2. 413[a]. 4-5.

[5]Van Cleve Morris, Philosophy and the American School: an Introduction to the Philosophy of Education (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1961), p. 55.

body as the prison-house of the soul;[1] instead he puts back together the phenomenal and noumenal worlds that Plato had rent asunder.[2]

In the earlier Platonic phase of his thinking, Aristotle seems to have thought of the nous (mind) as being immortal, independent of the body, and surviving it. But as he broke away from Plato, he saw the soul as connected with the body, having no preexistent state or immortal existence after death. When the body dies, the soul ceases to exist.[3] Thus he simplified Plato's anthropology, putting his own on a more naturalistic, scientific base. But what he gained in simplicity he lost with regard to meaning for human existence. Human life has no future beyond this one.

For Aristotle, the soul is what gives the body its essential character, entelechy, which is the fullest realization, the complete expression, of its function.[4] The human soul has three capacities: living, sensing, and thinking. The first two functions are shared with other forms of life, but the last is unique to man.[5] The most important function of the soul is to engage in rational activity.[6]

The nature of evil in man

To Aristotle, evil exists potentially in the soul of man since the soul is made up of irrational as well as rational parts. Reason, the rational part, is good; but the vegetative and appetitive parts which do the living and sensing (hence desiring) are irrational and

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[1]Stumpf, Philosophy, p. 104. [2]Morris, Philosophy, p. 55.

[3]Watson, Great Psychologists, p. 52. [4]Ibid., p. 51.

[5]Stumpf, Philosophy, p. 103. [6]Ibid., p. 107.

generally resist and oppose reason.[1] The appetitive part of the soul is especially inclined to evil, reacting to things and persons either with concupiscent or irascible passions. The concupiscent passion desires persons and things, whereas the irascible passion wants to avoid or destroy them.[2] The conflict between the rational and irrational elements in man is what raises the problems and subject matter of morality.[3]

Ethics and the good

In Aristotle's system, good is defined as the fulfillment of the purpose for which each thing exists.[4] From his observation of design and purpose in nature (leaves grow to protect fruit, roots strike down rather than up to nourish the plant), he derived his doctrine that in all things, including man, is implanted a dynamic principle which propels them to the fulfillment of their natural destiny.[5] All of nature is striving toward the fulfillment of its particular purposes, as, for instance, becoming a perfect tree, or a perfectly good man.[6]

If this is so, the question for ethics is, what is the good at which human behavior aims? Plato had defined it as something external to man, the Idea of the Good. For Aristotle, the principle of good and right was inbedded within man; hence, it could be discovered by

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[1]Aristotle, Nichomachian Ethics 1. 1102[a]-1102[b].

[2]Stumpf, Philosophy, p. 108. [3]Ibid., p. 107.

[4]Aristotle, Ethics 1. 1094[a], 1098[a]; David Ross, Aristotle (London: Methuen & Co., 1949), p. 192.

[5]LaRondelle, Perfection, p. 14. [6]Stumpf, Philosophy, p. 100.

studying the essential nature of man and could be attained through his actual behavior in daily life.[1] To discover the purpose of man's existence, he endeavored to determine what was unique about man. Growth and reproduction man shares with plants and animals; sensation he shares with animals.[2] What is unique about man is his rationality. If the function of man is an activity of soul which follows rational principle, then the human good turns out to be activity of soul in accordance with virtue.[3] The final goal of human existence and of all human pursuits Aristotle thought to be happiness (eudaemonia),[4] the perfection of the human metaphysical nature, the full unfolding of man's potential.[5] Aristotle personally thought that the greatest happiness that could come to human beings was the contemplation of truth, engaging in philosophical reflection.[6]

Since virtue is a key word in Aristotle's concept of the highest good, it becomes necessary to define it further. To him it means the control of the appetites and passions by reason which pursues the golden mean between the two extremes of either deficiency or excess. For example, generosity is the mean between stinginess on the one hand and extravagance on the other. Temperance is the mean between asceticism and over-indulgence. Courage is the mean between cowardliness and rashness. Good temper is the mean between apathy and irascibility.[7] (Aristotle recognizes that evils such as envy, adultery, theft, and

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[1]Ibid., p. 105. [2]Ross, Aristotle, p. 191.

[3]Aristotle, Ethics 1. 1097[a]-1098[a]. [4]Ibid.

[5]Idem, Physica 7. 3. 246[a]; LaRondelle, Perfection, p. 14.

[6]Aristotle, Ethics 6. 1177[a]-1177[b]. [7]Ibid. 2. 1106[b]-1108[a].

murder are always wrong in any degree.[1] The cardinal moral virtues are courage, temperance, justice, and wisdom.[2]

Character development

Since the mind of man begins as an empty tablet, goodness of character is neither natural nor unnatural; he starts with a capacity for it, but it must be developed.[3] Goodness in man is only potential; it does not develop naturally as an acorn grows into a tree. To move from the potential to the actual, man must know what he must do, deliberate over it, and then choose to do it.[4] Unlike Plato, who assumes that to know the good is to do the good, Aristotle sees that there must be choice and action as well as knowledge.[5]

Aristotle sees the importance of right habit formation beginning from youth.[6] Moral virtue comes through habit and exercise. "Just as men become builders by building and lyre-players by playing the lyre, so too we become just by doing just acts, temperate by doing temperate acts, brave by doing brave acts."[7] Morality has to do with developing habits, the habits of right thinking, right choice, and right behavior.[8] It is not enough to know the good; one must do it.

The role of "God" in character development

Aristotle is interested in the process of change from potentiality to actuality. Everything is moving toward the fulfillment of its purpose, its entelechy. Since character development is one type of

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[1]Ibid. 1107[a].

[2]Stumpf, Philosophy, p. 110.

[3]Ross, Aristotle, p. 192.

[4]Stumpf, Philosophy, p. 109.

[5]Ibid.

[6]Aristotle, Ethics 2. 1103[b].

[7]Ibid. 1103[a]-1103[b].

[8]Stumpf, Philosophy, p. 108.

motion toward a goal, it is relevant here to review Aristotle's theory of the ultimate cause of change--the First, or Unmoved, Mover.

Aristotle reasons that beyond the chain of cause and effect there must be a First Cause; behind all motion there must be a First Mover. His concept of a perfect, absolute, transcendent Being leads him to describe the First Mover as eternal, single, and impassible.[1] The First Mover, not being moved by anything other than itself, cannot think of lesser things. Since physical activity is excluded, he ascribes to it only mental activity of the kind which involves no process or change, but only direct, intuitive knowledge.[2] Such knowledge, not dependent on sense and imagination as in man, must be of that which is best; and that which is best is God. The object of his knowledge is therefore himself.[3] Aristotle denies to God any knowledge of change or of evil so that the result is "the impossible and barren ideal of a knowledge with no object but itself."[4] Since this Unmoved Mover does not know the world, and since he is not a physical agent, he cannot move the world directly. He moves it by being the object of its love and desire for him. To explain how an Unmoved Mover can cause motion, Aristotle uses the illustration of a lover who moves the beloved just by being the object of love, i.e., by the power of attraction, not by force.[5]

It can be seen, then, that Aristotle's "God" has no concern for the world; there is no concept of divine providence or of the God whom

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[1]Ross, Aristotle, p. 94.

[2]Ibid., p. 182.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Ibid., p. 183.

[5]Stumpf, Philosophy, p. 101.

men worship and from whom they seek help.[1] His interest in the Unmoved Mover is only to explain motion and change, not to provide an embodiment of the Good.

Thus Aristotle's "God" has no direct influence on character either as a model or an empowering agent. Character development is a purely human enterprise in which man actualizes the potential within himself by his own reason, choice, and action.

Summary: Aristotelianism

Aristotle rejects the concept of a world of mind and accepts as reality only the world of sense, understood by the empirical method. To him, man is a union of body and soul which exists and ceases to exist together. He does not believe in an eternal soul. Soul, as he understands it, is what gives the body its function and ultimate goal--to engage in rational activity.

Evil in man is caused by the irrational parts of the soul, the passions and appetites, which resist the control of the rational part. Morality is achieved by putting reason in control of the passions; by avoiding what is unlawful, such as murder, theft, and adultery, while taking a middle course between extremes in what is lawful; and by cultivating the cardinal virtues of temperance, courage, justice, and wisdom. Aristotle goes beyond Plato's dictum that knowledge is virtue: knowledge must be implemented by right choice, right action, and right habit formation. To him character development is not only a cognitive activity, but a behavioral one.

Aristotle knows no personal God who assists man in overcoming

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[1] George F. Thomas, Religious Philosophies of the West (New York: Scribner, 1965), pp. 36-37.

evil, but only an impersonal Unmoved Mover who attracts motion toward himself. For him character development is a human endeavor achieved by reason, the will, and behavior.

The Biblical Concept of Character

The biblical concept of character differs sharply from much of the reasoning of the Greek philosophers.

Anthropology

Biblical anthropology begins in theology, in the activity of the Creator God. While the Greeks assign an impersonal role to the Supreme Being, the Hebrews describe a personal God who thinks, wills, and gets involved with His creation. In contrast to philosophy, Scripture is never interested in explaining either the being or nature of God as He is in Himself: rather, it reveals Him in His actions as He enters into relationship with His creatures.[1] He is not an abstract, impersonal power, or an unconscious life-force, but a creating Person with the power to mold man's physical being and the will to demand his submission in the concrete details of daily life.[2]

The creation story, almost naive in its simplicity, is full of profound theological implications, the loss or denial of which has created serious philosophical dilemmas. First, man was created "good" with no flaws in his nature. Not only so, but the physical world, with its provision for the gratification of the senses and appetite, God

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[1]Louis Berkhof, Systematic Theology (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), p. 41; LaRondelle, Perfection, p. 63.

[2]Walter Eichrodt, Theology of the Old Testament, trans. J. A. Baker, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961, 1967), 1:206, 209.

declared to be "very good" (Gen 1:31). Even sexuality, the source of man's greatest moral conflicts, was ordained by God (vv. 22, 28). Second, evil is not a permanent part of existence, caused by defective "irrational parts" of soul or body, but is a temporary intruder (3:1ff.) ultimately to be destroyed (Rev 21:4). Third, man's nature is a unity (Gen 2:7) rather than a duality of two different elements moving along parallel lines not really united to form a single organism.[1]

The profoundest statement about man is that he was created in the image of God (Gen 1:26), bearing a likeness to Him as a son to a father (cf. 5:1-3), to live in a father-son relationship with Him.[2] The mode of man's creation also contains an intimation of divine-human closeness. God breathed into him the spirit of life (2:7) as Jesus breathed the Spirit into His disciples (Jn 20:22). Man was made to be indwelt by the Spirit of God.

The concept that man was created for fellowship with God is implicit in the institution of the Sabbath. The resting, blessing, and sanctifying of the Creator are all acts of the communion-seeking covenant God to bring man into fellowship with his Father God.[3] The Sabbath was given to man as a day to rest from his labors (Ex 20:10) in order that he might take delight in the Lord (Isa 58:13-14), worship Him (66:23), and know that "I am the Lord your God" (Ezek 20:20). Thus the Sabbath prevents man from seeking his dignity in himself or in nature, but in his relationship to his Father God.[4]

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[1]Berkhof, Systematic Theology, p. 192.

[2]LaRondelle, Perfection, p. 62.

[3]Ibid., p. 70.

[4]Ibid., p. 74.

Man's fallen condition

The origin and existence of evil have always constituted a deep philosophical problem. The Bible reveals that God cannot be regarded as the author of sin (Dt 32:4; Jas 1:13). He created the world and man as good (Gen 1:31). Sin began as a voluntary act, the violation of a direct command (2:17; 3:6). Man's act of flaunting God's will reveals that he was created with freedom to make his own decisions: i.e., he was not determined.

The nature of sin is the desire for autonomy, to be god without God (Gen 3:5), or god in opposition to God (Isa 14:13-14). Since man was not created as an autonomous being but as dependent upon God for life (Gen 2:7), sustenance (1:29), and meaningful relationships on the divine and human level (as seen in the creation of the woman and the Sabbath), his desire for autonomy could lead only to disintegration and death. First there was a breakdown of the divine-human relationship (3:8) followed by a breakdown on the interhuman level (3:12; 4:8). Sin also led to disintegration of the personality (Rom 7:15ff.):

> Man, in his rebellion, precisely in his insistence on autonomy, is in inescapable and deepseated conflict with himself, with his . . . true humanity . . . . For man as sinner is alienated not only from God but also from himself.[1]

Sin, then, is not something passive, such as a natural attribute of man's psychical or physical nature; it is not ignorance of the Forms, or deviation from them or failure to actualize one's potential.[2] It is the result of a free but evil choice of man (Gen 3:1-6). The predominant concept of the nature of sin in the Bible is that of

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[1] Berkouwer, Man: Image of God, p. 65.

[2] Berkhof, Systematic Theology, pp. 228-229; De Vries, "Sin," p. 361.

personal alienation from God, a dreadful estrangement from the sole source of well-being.[1] Sin is more than violation of the law (1 Jn 3:4): it is disobedience to the Lawgiver, rebellion against the Person of God (Isa 1:2, 4; Hos 7:13; Jer 14:20; Ps 51:4).[2] It is not just breaking a moral code, but breaking the heart of God (Hos 11:7-8).

Sin, then, is a breaking of the relationships into which man was created. It is the desire of the creature to be autonomous when he was created to be theonomous, to be independent when he was made to be dependent. Sin is a tearing apart of the oneness into which man was created, oneness with the divine and the human. Man in his stubborn autonomy is left in lonely isolation, conscious of vast emptinesses within himself.

The biblical concept of goodness

The biblical concept for goodness is expressed by the word righteousness, _sedeq_ in Hebrew and _dikaiosyne_ in the Greek. Righteousness as understood in the Old Testament is a thoroughly Hebraic concept, foreign to the Western mind and at variance with the common understanding of the term.[3] The Hebrew religious experience differed fundamentally from all the contemporary non-Hebrew religions and philosophies.[4] Righteousness in the Bible does not mean behavior in accordance with an ethical, legal, rational, religious, or spiritual norm, or conduct dictated by human nature, or impartial ministry to

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[1] De Vries, "Sin," pp. 361-362.

[2] LaRondelle, _Perfection_, p. 47.

[3] Elizabeth R. Achtemeier, "Righteousness in the OT," _IDB_ 4:80.

[4] LaRondelle, _Perfection_, p. 38.

one's fellow men, or giving every man his just due.[1] It is not an innate human quality as the Greeks thought,[2] or the result of consistent logical thinking, or harmony with an abstract postulate—"the Idea of the Good" (Plato), or harmony with the natural order (Aristotle).[3] Furthermore, the righteousness of Yahweh consists not in action consonant with His inner nature, or in works which conform to some norm or standard of right outside and above Him; it is not a distributive justice which rewards good and punishes evil as defined by law.[4]

Righteousness in the Old Testament is the fulfillment of the demands of a relationship, whether that relationship be with men or with God.[5] When man or God fulfills the conditions imposed upon him by a relationship, he is in Old Testament terms, righteous.[6]

The relationship between God and His people in the Old Testament is often described as a covenant. The covenant with Israel was based on God's election of Abraham and his descendants (Gen 12:2), on His salvation of Israel from Egyptian bondage (Ex 20:2), and on His laws which He commanded Israel to keep (Ex 19:5; Dt 4:13). Yahweh's righteousness is His fulfillment of the covenant which He has made with His chosen nation (Neh 9:7-8; Ps 103:17-18; 111:3, 5; Zech 8:8).[7] The divine actions are characterized as perfect (Dt 32:4) because they are

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[1]E. Achtemeier, "Righteousness in OT," p. 80.

[2]Ladd, Theology of OT, p. 439. [3]LaRondelle, Perfection, p. 38.

[4]E. Achtemeier, "Righteousness in OT," p. 82.

[5]Ibid., p. 80; Ladd, Theology of NT, p. 440; Eichrodt, Theology of OT, 1:240.

[6]E. Achtemeier, "Righteousness in OT," p. 80. [7]Ibid., p. 82.

all intent upon the fulfillment of His covenant promises and on God's being faithful to the obligations He has taken upon Himself in the covenant with Israel (Dt 7:9, 12).[1] The very name Yahweh, in the context of Ex 3, is the assurance of His presence with the covenant people.[2] The name is not like Elohim, which expresses God as essential, manifold power; it is a word that expresses, rather, relation: Elohim in relation to Israel is Yahweh.[3] So Yahweh, in the context of Ex 3, carries this theological significance: I am faithful to My promise; I am the Reliable One on whom you can count; I will not fail you; I will be with you. Now I am going to fulfill My covenant promise (Ex 3:12; cf. 6:5; Dt 31:8).[4]

The character of God is often expressed by the words ʾemeth and hesed, faithfulness and covenant love. ʾEmeth does not primarily describe God in Himself but the character of God's acts in dealing with His people. ʾEmeth is often coupled with hesed which designates God's loyalty in fulfilling His promises and His covenant.[5] This is His righteousness.

The righteousness of God's people is a corresponding faithfulness to Yahweh and His covenant as shown through obedience to the

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[1]LaRondelle, Perfection, p. 40.

[2]Implicit in the divine covenant name is the sense of constancy. The imperfect tense expresses continuity--the eternal constancy of the covenant God which stands over against the fickleness of Israel. Abba, "Yahweh," p. 327.

[3]A. B. Davidson, The Theology of the Old Testament (New York: Scribner, 1906), p. 56.

[4]LaRondelle, Perfection, pp. 41-42.

[5]Ladd, Theology of NT, p. 265.

covenant law (Dt 6:24-25).[1] This understanding of righteousness is explicit in the covenant law itself.

The law of the covenant

The law God gave as the basis of the covenant was not an expression of abstract ethical goodness, but the expression of the relationship of the covenant people to God and to the world (including both the "neighbor" and the "stranger" [Ex 20:16-17, 10]). The context of the law is the lordship of Yahweh. It provides for the sole worship of Him.[2] The first four commandments demand exclusive loyalty to the covenant God who is both Creator (v. 11) and Savior (v. 2). The last six express principles that are to govern relationships within the human family.

Love is the motivating principle of the law: law can be summarized in one word, love (Rom 13:10), or in two sentences, Love God, and Love your neighbor (Lk 10:27). Love expresses relationship within the covenant. Thus the Ten Commandments are unique in human laws by demanding not just ethical, moral behavior but an attitude of the total person: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might" (Dt 6:5).

The Ten Commandments can be satisfied only in the covenant relationship. The law is meaningless for righteousness outside of it. He who receives Yahweh's election in faith, who places his life under Yahweh's lordship, will follow the law, for the law is God's guidance within the covenant relationship.[3] For him who lacks such faith, who

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[1] Eichrodt, Theology of OT, 1:241-242.

[2] E. Achtemeier, "Righteousness in OT," p. 82. [3] Ibid.

stands outside the covenant, the law is worthless. The man who does not in faith accept the lordship of Yahweh cannot be righteous before Yahweh though he fulfill all other precepts of the law. Faith is the presupposition of the law, and works without such faith are useless. Obedience to the law does not make a man righteous. The relationship to Yahweh, the relationship of faith, is primary.[1]

The covenant relationship of love is a safeguard to that common perversion of the law, legalism. Love's very nature demands that it go far beyond all legal requirements.[2] The heart of Old Testament religion cannot be characterized as legalism, nor was the law given as the means of achieving a right relationship with God. The context of law was covenant, initiated by the gracious act of God. Israel was God's people not because of merit gained by obedience to law, but because of God's choice. The law was given as a means of binding Israel to God.[3]

Hence the Ten Commandment law itself is an expression of righteousness as relationship to the covenant God.

The biblical method of character development

The way to build character, as revealed in Scripture, is to bring man into an intimate relationship with God. Since man's rebellion caused an estrangement between him and God, a way had to be found to restore this relationship.

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Eichrodt, Theology of OT, 2:298.

[3] Ladd, Theology of NT, p. 496.

Reconciliation

The initiative for bringing about reconciliation was undertaken by God. "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself" (2 Cor 5:19). The purpose of reconciliation is that man become one with God (v. 20). Yet oneness could not be achieved without expiation because God's holiness cannot excuse or tolerate sin. So God paid the price His own justice and holiness required in order to reconcile man to Himself (Rom 3:24-25). The expiation for sin provided by Christ made it possible for God to maintain both His justice toward sin and mercy toward sinners (vv. 25-26).

A righteous character imputed

Because of Christ's expiatory death, God graciously "justifies the ungodly" (Rom 4:5); that is, He counts the sinner as righteous when he has no righteousness of his own (3:23-24). There are two aspects of justification: (1) the forgiveness of sin (4:7-8; cf. Ps. 32:1-2) and (2) the imputation of righteousness (Rom 4:3, 5). The only condition is that the sinner believe in Jesus Christ (3:26)—i.e., come into relationship with Him.

Justification is the pronouncement of the righteous Judge that the man in Christ is righteous. This does not mean ethical character. It means rather that the man in Christ now stands in the position of a righteous man (2 Cor 5:21).[1] He begins his personal battle with sin from the vantage point of freedom from guilt, acceptance with God, and participation in Christ's victory.

The doctrine of justification came to man by divine revelation

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[1] Ibid., pp. 443-446.

alone. It makes the gospel a rock of offense to all human self-righteousness, and a folly to all human philosophy and philosophical ethics (1 Cor 1:22-25).[1]

A righteous character imparted

Acceptance with God through justification brings the believer into such intimate relationship with God that he receives a new nature (Jn 3:3; 2 Pet 1:4) and is thus enabled to live a new life of ethical, subjective righteousness. God saves man in order to restore in him the moral image of God as it was originally (Lev 11:44; 1 Pet 1:15-16). The process of developing a subjective, righteous character has come to be known as sanctification.

Though justification and sanctification can be clearly distinguished from each other in the Bible, they can never be separated. Justification is to be followed immediately by sanctification--holy living (as Romans 5 is followed by Romans 6). The gift of right standing with God leads to the privilege of constant fellowship with Him, the wholehearted, obedient walk with God (Lev 26:11-12; Gen 6:9).

Righteousness is not equated with sinlessness but rather with a right relationship with God. Noah and Abraham, both called "blameless" (Gen 6:9; 17:1), were sinners; their perfect standing was due to their wholehearted walk with and right relationship to God. Neither the Torah nor the Psalms assume that the sincere Israelite could live in obedience to God's law without atonement. The Psalms reveal the need

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[1]LaRondelle, "The Gospel of Reconciliation," Sermon I for Evangelistic Council, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Jan. 4-8, 1977, p. 2.

for Yahweh's continual forgiving and keeping grace (Ps 139:23-24; cf. 19:12-14).[1]

Sanctification in the Old Testament is more than correct external behavior; it involves the core of man's being. Yahweh requires the whole heart (1 Ki 8:61; cf. 2 Ki 20:3; 1 Chr 28:9; 2 Chr 16:9, etc.). But what He requires, He bestows. He creates a clean heart and renews a right spirit within (Ps 51:10). He inclines the heart to walk in His commandments (1 Ki 8:58). He provides within the covenant the means by which Israel can attain the holiness He requires of them.[2] The law, which is a source of conflict to the unregenerate man (Jer 2:8; 11:7-8), can be fulfilled as a result of inward communion with the Lawgiver (Jer 24:7).[3] Thus sanctification in the Old Testament means a life of obedience through the enabling power of God.

The New Testament also describes sanctification as a walk (Rom 6:4-5). Human effort is needed in sanctification, for sanctification requires man's total effort in a life of "slavery" to God which issues in righteousness and obedience (vv. 16-19). There is a cooperation of the human with the divine in willing and doing God's will (Php 2:12-13). Christ dwells in the heart through the Spirit (Eph 3:16-19), conforming the character to His likeness (2 Cor 3:18; 1 Jn 3:2-3).

In the biblical method of character development, then, the character of Christ is imputed and imparted to the one who enters into a faith relationship with Him.

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[1]Idem, Perfection, 113-114. [2]Milton, Covenant, p. 143.

[3]Eichrodt, Theology of OT, 2:295.

Summary: the Biblical Concept of Character

The biblical view of God, man, sin, righteousness, and character development differs radically from that of the philosophers.

The Deity is not an impersonal, distant, static Being, but an active, creating God who is personally involved with His creatures. He created man in His own image, for fellowship with Himself, dependent upon Himself for life, purpose, and meaning. Sin began as a voluntary act, the violation of a divine command, motivated by the desire for autonomy. Sin is characterized by alienation from and hostility to God. It resulted in the breakdown of divine-human relations, and personal disintegration.

Righteousness in the Bible is not harmony with an ideal or law, or with the natural order, but is the fulfillment of the demands of the covenant relationship with God. God's righteousness is His faithfulness in fulfilling the covenant promises to His people. Their righteousness is a corresponding faithfulness to Him shown through obedience to the covenant law, the essence of which is wholehearted love to God and man.

The way to develop a righteous character, according to Scripture, is for man to come into a faith relationship with God. God provided the way to heal the severed relationship by reconciling the world to Himself through the expiatory death of Christ. His death made it possible for God to forgive sin and impute righteousness to all who believe in Him. The faith relationship brings man into such a close relationship with God that he is able to develop a righteous character through the indwelling power of the Spirit. Thus the righteous character of Christ is imputed and imparted to the believer.

CHAPTER V

THE CONCEPT OF CHARACTER IN THE APOCALYPSE

Character in secular literature has to do with the moral and ethical aspects of personality; in Scripture it includes the spiritual and religious dimensions as well, whether of harmonious or antagonistic relationship to God. The book of Revelation, in the typical dualistic fashion of apocalyptic literature,[1] describes two types of character: likeness to God, personified in Christ, the Lamb; and likeness to Satan, personified in the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet. The two opposing types of character are symbolized by the seal, or name, of God written on the foreheads of the saints (3:12; 7:3; 14:1; 22:4); and by the mark or name of the beast, written on the forehead and hand of its followers (13:16-17; 14:9; 16:2; 20:4). In the final eschatological warfare between the Lamb and the Beast, all of mankind will be found on one side or the other, with one mark or the other (13:8).

Beginning with the Apocalyptic view of the nature of man, this chapter will describe character in its good and evil forms, the method of developing righteous character, the final test of character, and the basis on which character will be judged—all as portrayed in the book of Revelation.

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[1] Morris, Apocalyptic, p. 49.

The Apocalyptic View of Man

The origin of man

Man is depicted in the Apocalypse as a being created by the will of God (4:11; 10:6) for the purpose of giving glory to God, fearing Him, and worshiping Him (14:7). He was made for fellowship with God (3:20; 7:17; 14:4; 21:3; 22:4).

The nature of man

Constitutional nature. In contrast to the Greek dualistic (soul-body dichotomy) view of man, Revelation presupposes the holistic view of the Hebrews, which Ladd describes as follows:

> Soul (nephesh) is not a higher part of man standing over against his body, but designates the vitality or life principle in man . . . . Body and the divine breath together make the vital, active nephesh . . . . Incorporeal life for the nephesh is never visualized. Death afflicted the nephesh (Num 23:10), as well as the body.[1]

The word soul in Revelation means a living person or creature (18:13,[2] 14; 16:3).

The description of the death and resurrection of the Two Witnesses in chapter 11 accords with the Hebrew idea of life, death, and resurrection. Breath (spirit) comes into an inanimate body and becomes a living person (11:11; cf. Gen 2:7; Ezek 37:1-10).

One text in which souls appear to be disembodied spirits is Rev 6:9-11:

> When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne; they cried out with a loud voice, "O Sovereign

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[1] Theology of NT, p. 458.

[2] The Greek pasa psychē zōēs is a Hebrew idiom kol nepeš haḥāyāh (Swete, Revelation, p. 201) and expresses the idea of soul as a living creature rather than a disembodied spirit.

> Lord, holy and true, how long before thou wilt judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell upon the earth?" Then they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been.

However, these "souls . . . who had been beheaded for their testimony to Jesus and for the word of God" were not alive at the time of the fifth seal, for they do not "come to life" until their thousand-year reign with Christ (20:4). They were told to "rest a little longer." Rest is a euphemism for death (cf. 14:13). Their coming to life to reign a thousand years with Christ is called "the first resurrection" (20:5). The New Testament doctrine of resurrection depicts the raising of the body (Mt 28:6; Jn 5:28-29). Hence, soul here means what it does in the rest of the Bible--the whole person. In the fifth seal the souls are dead persons at rest; at their resurrection they become living persons.

If the souls of the martyrs are dead during the fifth seal, in what sense can they be said to cry out for vengeance? In Hebrew thought, the soul (life) was in the blood (Lev 17:11). Many commentators agree that the text applies symbolically to the blood of the martyrs crying out as the blood of Abel cried to God from the ground (Gen 4:10).[1] They are "under the altar" because the blood of sacrifices was poured out at the base of the altar (Lev 4:30): this is a vivid way of picturing the fact that they had been martyred in the name of their God.[2]

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[1]Ladd, Revelation, p. 103. See also Swete, Revelation, p. 90; Caird, Revelation, p. 84; Hendriksen, Conquerors, p. 128; William Barclay, The Revelation of St. John, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 2:13.

[2]Barclay, Revelation 2:13.

It must be noted further that the Revelator speaks of man's ultimate home as the new earth, thus suggesting a phenomenal world of sense rather than a noumenal, idealist "heaven." The restoration of the tree of life (2:7; 22:2, 14) suggests that man will be restored to his Edenic state when he had a physical body inbreathed by the Spirit, constituting him a living soul (Gen 2:7).

Sinfulness; need of salvation. In the Apocalypse, man is in a state of sin and rebellion against God. Whether sinful or righteous, he cannot endure the presence of God (1:7, 17; 6:15-16). In his unregenerate state he rebels against the judgments of God (9:20-21) and curses God (16:10-11). He regards God's witnesses as a torment (11:10) and rejoices over their death (ibid.). He makes war on God's people (13:7) and upon God Himself (17:14; 19:19; 20:8-9). Sin is a powerful force even in the saints, who must constantly resist the inclination toward coldness and indifference to God (2:4-5; 3:1-2, 15, 19).

All, whether righteous or wicked, need to repent (2:5, 16, 21; 3:3, 19; 9:20-21; 16:9, 11). Man is in bondage to sin and can be freed only by the blood of Christ (1:5; 5:9) which washes away sin (7:14) and gives power to overcome the devil (12:11). Salvation is a gift for which the saints praise God (7:10; 19:1).

Freedom of will. The Apocalypse appears to teach both predestination and free will:

> And all who dwell on earth will worship [the beast], every one whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb that was slain (13:8; cf. 17:8).

Does this indicate that men are doomed to "worship the beast" because God did not predestine them to be saved? Predestination here does not

appear to interfere with man's free choice, since the saved can be lost and the lost can be saved. Rev 3:5 implies that names can be blotted out of the book of life; those in Christ can be expelled (2:5; 3:16). On the other hand, the wicked can repent: the purpose of God's judgments is to lead them to repentance (2:21; 9:20). The gospel invitation is extended to the whole world, especially the unrighteous (14:6-7).[1]

The exhortations of the Apocalypse, addressed to both saints and sinners (2:5, 16, 25, etc.; 14:7, 9-10; 18:4; 22:17), presuppose the free will of man:

> And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. . . . And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely (22:17, AV).

The worship instinct. Since man was created to worship God, it is part of his nature to worship--though he may often pervert this instinct. The saints worship God (7:9-10). The prophet attempted to worship the angel who communicated with him (19:10; 22:8). Evil men worship the works of their hands--insensate idols--and demons (9:20); they universally worship the anti-God powers (the beast and his image) (13:4, 8, 12; 14:9). Eventually all men, good and evil alike, will feel impelled to worship God (5:13; 15:4).

The destiny of man

Revelation depicts a twofold destiny for man. For the enemies of God there will be torment (14:10; 20:10) culminating in death: they

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[1] The expression "those who dwell on the earth" in Revelation means men hostile to God (6:10; 11:10; 13:8, 14; 17:8).

are "slain by the sword" (19:21); fire consumes them;[1] they suffer "the second death" (20:14; 21:8); they are destroyed (11:18). The righteous, by contrast, do not suffer the second death (20:6, 21:4), but they reign for ever and ever (22:5) in the presence of God (3:12; 7:15; 22:4), with a character that reflects His character (3:12; 14:1; 22:4).

Summary: the Apocalyptic View of Man

Man, as portrayed in the Apocalypse, is a holistic being composed of a body inbreathed by the divine spirit, constituting him a living soul. He is not a dualism of divine spirit inhabiting a fallen body. Evil does not reside inherently in the material world, but in man's alienation from God. Death means the absence of life; eternal life is attained through resurrection of the body. Man derives his origin, significance, and destiny from God. The meaning of his life depends upon his relationship to God, whether of hostility which leads to eternal destruction, or harmony which leads to eternal life.

The Norm of Character

The character of God

In the Apocalypse the character of God is the basis for the moral structure of the universe, since He created and judges all (4:11; 14:7). It is also the norm of character for man: the name (representing character[2]) of God is written on the foreheads of the saints (3:12; 14:1, 5; 22:4). Both the communicable and incommunicable attributes

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[1]The Greek uses the perfective verb katesthiō—consume, devour, eat up.

[2]Raymond Abba, "Name," IDB 3:501-502; Morris, Revelation, p. 69.

of God will be considered as they affect His character. Since Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one in character, They will be treated together, rather than separately, in this section.

Self-disclosure

God first appears in the Apocalypse as a communicating God: He reveals Himself to man through a line of communication which includes Jesus Christ, His angel, the prophet, and the church (1:1-3). The divine self-disclosure opens up to man the knowledge of His character, His will, and His purposes in history (1:4-7). The knowledge He imparts, called "the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ" (1:2), is preserved in book form (1:11; 22:9, 18) as a deposit of truth for all to read, hear (1:3), and heed (22:7). God shows Himself not as an isolated, impassible, wholly transcendent Deity, but as active and involved in the affairs of the whole creation, knowing and wanting to be known (3:15, 20).

Self-existence

God next reveals Himself as the self-existent One: "him who is and who was and who is to come" (1:4, repeated in 1:8; 11:17; 16:5), showing that He is the God of present, past, and future. Numerous scholars see this designation as an extension of the name Yahweh, built upon the LXX of Ex 3:14, ho ōn.[1] The name Yahweh, I AM, conveys rich meanings such as covenant relationship (Ex 6:2-7), eternal constancy, dependability, and faithfulness ("I am Yahweh, I change not" [Mal 3:6]), and the eternal presence of God with His people to save them

[1] E.g., see Du Preez, "Mission Perspective," p. 153; Ladd, Revelation, p. 24; Caird, Revelation, p. 16.

Ex 3:12, 17).[1] Thus the designation "him who is and who was and who is to come" signifies the constancy, reliability, faithfulness, and eternal presence of God in relation to His people.

Other titles of God indicating self-existence are "Alpha and Omega," "the beginning and the end," "the first and the last," applied to both Father (Rev 1:8) and Son (1:17; 21:6; 22:13). The basic formula, "the first and the last," is derived from Isa 44:6 and 48:12. These texts accent the uniqueness of the one God as Creator and Redeemer, the ultimate source and ground of existence, who alone can reveal the future. Because He is the Alpha, He alone holds supreme power over heaven and earth. Because He is the Omega, the end, He alone can "tell us what is yet to be" (Isa 44:7). Jesus Christ's designation as "the first and the last and the living one" (Rev 1:17-18) indicates His primacy in creation and His role as the eschatological Redeemer of all things. His firstness and lastness are validated by the fact of His death and resurrection (v. 18).[2]

Omnipotence and sovereignty

God is revealed in the Apocalypse as omnipotent and sovereign. He is "the Almighty" (1:8) to whom belong glory, honor, and power (4:11; 5:13; 7:12; 19:1). As the Lord of time, He sets limits to the reign of evil (10:6-7; 13:5; 20:2).[3] As the King of saints (15:3) He

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[1]Raymond Abba, "The Divine Name Yahweh," Journal of Biblical Literature 80 (1961):320-328; LaRondelle, Perfection, p. 42.

[2]Paul S. Minear, "Alpha and Omega," IDB 1:88-89.

[3]Evil has no power except by God's permission, as the repeated use of edothē (it was given) indicates (6:4, 8; 7:2; 9:5; 13:5, 15; 16:8). God allows suffering in this present life. The justification for it is that He will some day make all wrongs right (7:15-17; 21:4).

commands the total allegiance and obedience of His people (2:10, 23, 26, etc.). As Lord of lords and King of kings (17:14; 19:16) He rules over the kings of the earth (1:5), most of whom will feel His wrath (6:15-16; 19:17-18), some of whom will enter the city (21:24), and all of whom will eventually give Him the glory that is His due (5:13). Jesus Christ has the authority of the keys (3:7): by virtue of His death and resurrection He holds the keys of Death and Hades (1:18) with power to release the dead (20: 4-5, 13); He has ultimate control of the bottomless pit (20:1)—the devil previously having had a measure of control over it (9:1-2, 11). Father and Son hold in their hands the scroll of human destiny (5:1, 5).

Omniscience

Christ in the Apocalypse is presented as having all knowledge. He has "eyes like a flame of fire" (1:14) which search His people through and through. To each of the seven churches He writes, "I know" (2:2, 9, 13; 3:1, 8, 15). He sees and knows all. Nothing can escape His penetrating gaze. As the Lamb with seven eyes "which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth" (5:6; cf. Zech 4:10), He has constant and accurate information about everything going on in His realm.[1]

Holiness

Holiness is cited as an attribute of God (Rev 3:7; 4:8; 6:10). Holiness signifies the essential nature of Yahweh, the "otherness" that

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[1]Mounce, "Christology," p. 44.

separates and distinguishes God from man,[1] the essential nature of the sacred and the innermost reality of all the other divine attributes.[2] In the ultimate sense, God only is holy (15:4).

Faithfulness

Jesus is described as "Faithful and True" (1:5; 3:14; 19:11) and His words are faithful and true (21:5; 22:6). In Scripture the first use of "faithful" applied to God describes Yahweh as "the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments" (Dt 7:9; cf. Isa 49:7). The Hebrew ʾāman, from which Amen is derived, means to be firm, faithful, true, certain, permanent, steadfast, reliable.[3] Jesus is called "the Amen, the faithful and true witness." Amen, the covenant oath, means that the pledge will not fail (2 Cor 1:20).[4] The Greek words for faithful (pistos) and true (alēthinos) mean trustworthy and dependable.[5]

Christ is "faithful and true" in three functions:

1. He is "faithful unto death"; Rev 1:5 connects His being a "faithful witness" with His death in the same manner as Antipas was a faithful witness unto death (2:13).[6]

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[1]Norman H. Snaith, The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament (London: Epworth Press, 1944), pp. 79, 29.

[2]J. Muilenburg, "Holiness," IDB 2:616.

[3]James Strong, Hebrew and Chaldee Dictionary in The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1890), p. 14.

[4]Ladd, Revelation, pp. 64-65.

[5]Bauer, Greek-English Lexicon.

[6]Caird, Revelation, p. 16; Aune, "St. John's Portrait," p. 139.

2. He is a faithful witness in rebuking His people (3:14), as a faithful witness who does not lie, but speaks the truth (Pr 14:5, 25).

3. As the Faithful and True One He judges and makes war (Rev 19:11). His judgments are fair and just (16:4) for they punish His enemies and deliver His people.

Love

In the Apocalypse, God's love is extended both to His people and to the hostile world.

The three members of the Trinity extend grace and peace to the churches (1:4-5). Jesus revealed His love by the ultimate sacrifice of death (5:6, 9; 13:8), which frees His people from sin (1:5). He identifies with the sufferings of His people (1:9), vindicating them before their enemies (3:9; 18:20), succoring them through persecution (12:6, 14, 16) and death (14:13). In the age to come, He shepherds them to living waters (7:17), and the Father Himself wipes the tears from their eyes (7:17; 21:4), comes to dwell with them (21:3), and shelters them with His presence (7:15-16). Even reproof and chastening are evidences of His love (3:19).

Divine love is also extended to the hostile world, described as "those who dwell on the earth" (6:10; 11:10; 13:8, 14; 17:8), as "tribes and tongues and nations" (11:9; 13:7; 17:15), as "kings of the earth," "great men," "the rich and the strong," "slave and free" (6:15; 19:18), and as "Babylon," the archenemy of God. Yet the gospel is proclaimed "to those who dwell on earth, . . . every nation and tribe and tongue and people," and for multitudes of them His redemption is effective (5:9-10): many "kings of the earth" enter the New Jerusalem

21:24), and Babylon itself contains many of God's people who are called to come out of her (18:4). The invitation to receive eternal life is extended to all who are thirsty and have a desire to come (22:17). Even God's judgments on the wicked world have a redemptive purpose (9:20; 16:9).

Wrath

Wrath is a prominent attribute of the character of God in the book of Revelation and is coextensive with His love—since wrath is an expression of wounded love (3:16, 19).

Just as God's love is directed to saints and sinners alike, so is His wrath. The appearance of Christ (1:13-16) suggests wrath to church and world alike: His eyes as a flame of fire (1:14) condemn both church (2:18, 23) and hostile world (19:12); His feet of burnished bronze (1:15) threaten the church (2:18) and trample His enemies in fury (19:15); the sharp two-edged sword from His mouth strikes out at immorality in the church (2:14-16) as well as smiting the nations (19:15); His face as the sun shining in full strength (1:16) prostrates the prophet (1:17) and terrorizes the wicked (6:16).

Christ's wrath toward His people is a manifestation of His love: "Those whom I love I reprove and chasten" (3:19). The dimension of His love measures the severity of His wrath, the wrath of wounded love, since the covenant God is jealous of any unfaithfulness toward Him.[1] The sins which call forth His wrath are unresponsiveness to Him (loss of love [2:4], deadness of soul [3:1], lukewarmness [3:16]), and attraction to rival masters and lords, indicated by such words as

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[1]B. T. Dahlberg, "Wrath of God," IDB 4:906-907.

"idols," "immorality," (2:14, 20) and "adultery" (2:20-22). That these terms are to be understood symbolically rather than literally is borne out by the rest of the book, in which porneia has the meaning of religious infidelity (17:1-2; 18:3; 19:2, etc.).[1]

Wrath against the world is caused by its oppression of God's people (16:5-6; 17:6; 19:2), by false worship and allegiance to rival powers (14:9-10), and by warfare against God (19:19-21). In pouring out His wrath, God uses evil men and demonic forces[2] (6:4; 9:1-11; 16:14; 17:16-17) as well as His own direct action[3] (11:18; 14:10; 15:4; 16:7-8; 19:11, 15). The wrath of God is exercised only temporarily, coming to an end (15:1) when the occasion for wrath, namely sin, is eradicated (22:3).

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[1]Caird, Revelation, p. 39.

[2]Thus evil punishes evil. Notice how God used His enemy, Assyria, as "the rod of my anger" in punishing Israel (Isa 10:5-6).

[3]A. T. Hanson, in his comprehensive treatment of the wrath of God (The Wrath of the Lamb) argues that the wrath of God in Revelation does not represent personal vindictiveness on the part of God toward sinners but an impersonal process of retribution that works itself out in the course of history as a consequence of the rejection and crucifixion of the Messiah (p. 170). The wrong-doer suffers the natural consequences of the law of cause and effect. The sphere of wrath is the sphere of the law (p. 110) and not of Christ who exhibits only self-sacrificing love (p. 170).

Hanson's argument rests upon three assumptions:

1. The Bible writings progress from primitive to more enlightened views. The Old Testament depicts wrath as an emotion of God (sometimes capricious) whereas the New Testament does not (p. 9).

2. God is love. Wrath as an emotion is inconsistent with love, and therefore not "Christian" (p. 178).

3. The book of Revelation was largely fulfilled in the time of Rome (the preterist view). The wine of God's wrath against Babylon was fulfilled historically in the fall of Rome.

There are, however, these serious difficulties in Hanson's views:

1. He creates a dichotomy between the Old and New Testaments, denying the basic unity and harmony of Scripture.

2. He creates a dichotomy between God and His law. He sees Christ as loving and sacrificial, whereas it is the law which works

God is called "just" in the Apocalypse only in connection with the pouring out of His judgments (16:5, 7; 19:2; see 19:11).[1] His judgments demonstrate His justice, which demands that sin be punished and righteousness be rewarded (15:3-4; 11:18). However, God is concerned not only with <u>being</u> just, but with being <u>perceived</u> as just. He requires the moral support of the universe for His actions. He might be accused of being too lenient, as the cry of the martyrs (6:10) implies. Or His unmitigated wrath (14:10) might be criticized as being too severe. It is significant that when His judgments are finally poured out, heaven and earth alike proclaim that He is just (15:3-4; 16:5-7; 19:1-2).

Though God cannot be the norm for humanity in His incommunicable attributes (self-existence, sovereignty, omnipotence, omniscience, holiness), His communicable attributes are seen in Revelation as reflected in His people. He discloses Himself through "the word of

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wrath through the impersonal moral order of the universe. No one would deny that sin often brings its own dread consequences without the direct intervention of God. But to deny that God ever does act directly in punishing evil is to contradict the plain testimony of Scripture (examples: the flood; the destruction of Sodom; the earth swallowing up Korah, Dathan, and Abiram; the execution of Ananias and Sapphira; the lake of fire). In endeavoring to separate God from His law, Hanson forgets that law is an expression of the character of God. If the law exhibits wrath toward sin, so does God.

3. His "realized eschatology," in which wrath is worked out naturally in history, does not do justice to the Apocalyptic picture of wrath as an eschatological judgment in which God acts as He has never before acted in history. History does not give adequate rewards; there must be an eschatological judgment to settle accounts. Hanson's treatment of Rev 14:9-11 is weak: he does not discuss the lake of fire which must be eschatological and not historical. His preteristic view virtually cancels out any view of a last-day <u>dies irae</u>.

[1]The RSV correctly translates <u>dikaios</u> as <u>just</u> rather than <u>righteous</u> in these cases. To be consistent, they should have translated <u>dikaiosyne</u> in 19:11 as justice: "In justice he judges and makes war."

God and the testimony of Jesus"; His people are channels in this same communication (1:9; 6:9). He is constant, reliable, and faithful; His true followers are faithful in suffering and death (1:9; 2:13). He is sovereign Lord; they share His dominion by reigning with Him (20:6). He alone is ultimately holy; they are holy (22:11) through consecration to Him. He is a God of love; they too are loving (2:19). He responds to sin with wrath; they share in executing His wrath (2:26-27).

The character of God in its communicable attributes is thus seen as the norm by which humanity is to live and be judged.

Jesus as norm

The many similarities between Christ and the saints in the Apocalypse indicate that the Revelator clearly intended to depict Jesus as the norm, the pattern, the model for the saints to follow in both experience and character. Though there are vast qualitative differences between Christ and the saints, noted at the close of this section, these differences must not be allowed to obscure the author's point that the church as the body of Christ repeats the experience of the Head and reflects His character.

Experience

Jesus is witness to the truth of God (1:1-2, 5; 3:14); the saints are witnesses (1:9; 2:13; 6:9; 11:3; 12:17; 20:4). Jesus is King (19:16) and priest (1:13); the saints are kings and priests (1:6; 5:10; 20:6). Jesus suffered; the saints share His sufferings (1:9). Jesus died a violent death (5:6, 9—sphazesthai: to be butchered, slaughtered, murdered[1]); the martyrs are also violently put to death

[1]Bauer, Greek-English Lexicon, s.v. "sphazō."

6:9; 20:4—slaughtered and beheaded). Jesus rose from the dead (1:18); the saints also will come to life (20:4). Jesus conquered (5:5); the saints "repeat in their own lives the archetypal victory of Christ" (3:21).[1] Jesus sits on the throne of God (ibid.) and reigns as King of kings and Lord of lords (11:15; 19:16). The saints will sit with Him on His throne (3:21) and reign with Him (2:26-27; 5:10; 22:5).

The "two witnesses" of Rev 11 especially share the experiences of Christ: they witness for 1260 days (v. 2), the length of His ministry; they are killed (v. 7); they lie dead for a similar period of time (v. 11) in the city where their Lord was crucified (v. 8); the wicked rejoice at their death (v. 10; cf. Jn 16:20); they rise from the dead (Rev 11:11) and ascend to heaven in a cloud (v. 12; cf. Acts 1:9).

A prominent concept in the book is that fellowship with Christ in His sufferings leads to fellowship in His victory and reign later.

Character

Many of the qualities of Christ are seen in the saints. They reflect His patient endurance in trial (Rev 1:9; 2:2; 14:12). They hate the sin that He hates (2:6); they are faithful (2:10, 13; 17:14) as He is faithful (1:5; 3:14; 19:11). The saints are holy (18:20; 20:6; 22:6, 11) as He is holy (3:7). They are clothed in white (3:4-5; 6:11; 7:9, 14; 19:8, 14), the color of His purity (1:14; 19:11; 20:11), and with the sun (12:1), His glory (1:16; 10:1) which is righteousness (Isa 58:8; Ps 37:6).

The saints follow the Lamb wherever He goes, both in this life and the life to come (Rev 14:4; cf. Jer 2:2). Jesus' ethic is an ethic

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[1] Caird, Revelation, p. 297.

of following, copying, conforming to Himself.[1]

While the saints conform to Christ in experience and character, there are significant qualitative differences between Him and them:

1. The death of Christ, symbolized by "the blood of the Lamb," has enormous powers: it frees from sin (1:5), cleanses (7:14), ransoms lost humanity (5:9), and gives victory over Satan (12:11). The blood of the martyrs, by contrast, calls for vengeance upon God's enemies and provides the occasion for the pouring out of God's judgments (6:10; 16:4-7; 17:6; 19:2). Their blood does not have saving, cleansing power.

2. In the process of divine communication with man, Jesus, as the originator of "the testimony of Jesus," is a primary source (1:1-2). The saints at best are secondary sources (20:4).

3. Jesus is "King of kings and Lord of lords" (19:16); the saints must then be subordinate, or vassal, kings (20:6).

A study of the messages to the seven churches reveals that the saints, often defective (chapters 2 and 3), can achieve righteousness by dependence upon Christ (3:18)—by being clothed with the glory of Christ (12:1). It is by union with Him that they reflect His character.

The commandments as a norm of character

Two times in the Apocalypse the saints are described as "those who keep the commandments of God (12:17; 14:12).[2] The commandments

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[1] LaRondelle, Perfection, p. 46.

[2] A third reference, "Blessed are they that do his commandments" in 22:14 is based on an inferior text (Metzger, Textual Commentary, pp. 767-768.)

thus become a norm of righteous character.

The question arises as to which commandments are meant in the above texts: the Decalogue, or New Testament precepts of Jesus. In the New Testament the commandments generally apply to the Decalogue, especially in the Synoptics and Pauline writings (Mt 5:17-19; 15:3-4; 19:17; Mk 10:19; Lk 23:56; Rom 7:7-8; Eph 6:2). Jesus emphasized that the underlying principles of the law were love to God and man (Mt 22:36-40). His teachings transcended the Decalogue but never repudiated it. Similarly, though Paul revealed the inadequacy of the law for salvation, he never diminished the obligation to keep it.[1] Faith working through love (Gal 5:6) produces obedience to the law (v. 14).

John in his gospel and epistles uses the word "commandment" or "commandments" with a different emphasis, referring to the imperative to love, to believe, and to do the will of God (Jn 13:34; 15:12; 1 Jn 2:8, 10; 3:23; 4:21; 2 Jn 5-6). They are identified as Jesus' commandments. The commandments in John involve more than moral precepts; they involve a whole way of life in loving union with Christ.[2] However, the Johannine emphasis on the commandment to love is basically the same as Jesus' and Paul's emphasis on love as the underlying principle of the Decalogue (Mt 22:36-40; Gal 5:14).

In Revelation "the commandments of God" (not of Jesus as in John's gospel) must refer to the precepts of the Decalogue in the usual New Testament sense. Evidence for this may be seen in the structure of the passage. Chapters 12 to 14 are viewed against the sanctuary

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[1] G. Schrenk, "Entolē," TDNT 2:549, 552.

[2] Raymond E. Brown, The Gospel According to John XIII-XXI (Garden City: Doubleday, 1970) p. 638.

"backdrop" scene of 11:19 which exposes the ark of the covenant in the Most Holy Place of the heavenly sanctuary. The ark had two features, the law of the ten commandments inside representing divine justice, and the mercy seat above representing pardon through faith in Christ. The expression "commandments of God and faith of Jesus" (14:12) thus derives from these two features of the ark.

In both 12:17 and 14:12 we see the Johannine peculiarity of never speaking of the commandments without mentioning Jesus.[1] John combines the chief characteristic of Old Testament sainthood, obedience to the law, with the chief factor in the Christian life, the faith of Jesus.[2] Both law and gospel are here included.[3]

The moral principles of the Ten Commandments are an expression of the character of God. The two tables are summed up in the principle of love (Mt 22:36-40) which is the supreme attribute of God (1 Jn 4:8). Hence it is to be expected that the saints would develop characters in harmony with the law of God.

Summary: the Norm of Character

This study reveals that the character of God in its communicable attributes is the norm for human character. God has revealed His character to mankind through the life and example of Jesus, and through His commandments--both of which are expressions of His character. The qualities of God's character to be reflected in man are faithfulness, loyalty shown by endurance in suffering, faith, love, holiness, and righteousness.

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[1]Schrenk, "Entolē," p. 553.

[2]Swete, Revelation, p. 186.

[3]Lenski, Revelation, p. 439.

Man is thus held accountable to a standard outside of and above his own human nature, or his own rational concepts of goodness. He is called back to the primordial norm of imaging God as the goal of human existence.

Evil Character in the Apocalypse

Evil, or sin, can be defined in the ethical sense as transgression of a moral code, or in a religious sense as rebellion against the person of God.[1] In the Revelation, sin is described in religious terms involving man's relationship to God. The concept of sin as a violation of a moral code appears only indirectly.

John depicts evil as a force that not only pervades the atmosphere of the world (9:2) but that infiltrates the church (chapters 2 and 3). Hence we will consider evil as it manifests itself in the world and in the church.

Evil in the World

Hostility to God, His people, and His law

The most pervasive sin in Revelation is hostility to God and all that He represents, reminiscent of the words of Paul:

> For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, indeed it cannot; and those who are in the flesh cannot please God (Rom 8:7-8).

The hostility of Satan and his hosts against God, His law, and His people, is so great that it is called war.

Satan is the instigator and prime actor: he initiates the war in heaven (Rev 12:7); he attempts to kill the incarnate Christ (v. 4); he attacks the people of God (vv. 13, 15); he makes war on those who

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[1] Snaith, Distinctive Ideas of OT, p. 60.

keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus (v. 17). Here, then, we see hostility to Christ, His people, and His commandments.

Some of the agents which Satan uses in his warfare are the beast from the bottomless pit who makes war on the "two witnesses" and kills them (11:7), the leopard beast who makes war on the saints and conquers them (13:7); and the ten kings who, in league with the beast, make war on the Lamb (17:13-14). In the final battle, the beast and the kings of the earth with their armies gather to make war against Christ (19:19).

Hostility against Christ is revealed in the persecution of His people. As a result of witnessing to Jesus, John suffered exile (1:9); the church of Smyrna was to experience imprisonment and death (2:10); Antipas was killed (2:13); the "souls under the altar" had been brutally slain (6:9);[1] or beheaded (20:4);[2] the "two witnesses" were killed and left exposed on the street (11:7-8); those who do not worship the beast are not allowed to buy or sell (13:17) and are slain (v. 15). The harlot woman is drunk with the blood of the saints and witnesses of Jesus (17:6; 18:24). In all of their suffering, the saints but follow in the steps of their Lord who also was violently slain (5:6, 9; 13:8).

Mankind hates the prophetic message as found in the law and the

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[1] Sphazein means to slaughter, butcher, or murder (Bauer, Greek-English Lexicon, s.v. sphazō), suggesting a violent death.

[2] Pelekizō means behead with an ax, from pelekys, ax.

prophets,[1] regarding it as torment (11:10). "Those who dwell on the earth" gloat over the death of the "two witnesses" (ibid.) because the voice of reproof is silenced. They commit the ultimate indignity of refusing to let their corpses be buried.

A lesser form of persecution is suggested by the word slander (2:9), or false accusation of the saints by the "synagogue of Satan," who follow the example of their leader, the "accuser of our brethren," who "accuses them day and night before our God" (12:10).

Blasphemy. The Antichrist powers of Revelation blaspheme God (13:1, 5-6; 17:3). In the New Testament, blasphemy covers a range of meanings such as ascribing the work of God to Satan (Mk 3:22, 28-29), bringing reproach upon the name of God through a sinful life (Rom 2:24); derision, scorn, mockery (Mt 27:39-40; Luke 22:63-65; 23:39); cursing God (Rev 16:11, 21); slander (2:9); and the assumption by man of the position and prerogatives of God (Mt 9:2-3; 26:64-65; John 10:33). Antichrist's blasphemy combines several of these meanings:

> And I saw a beast rising out of the sea, with ten horns and seven heads, with ten diadems upon its horns and a blasphemous name upon its heads . . . .
> And the beast was given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words . . . ; it opened its mouth to utter blasphemies against God, blaspheming his name and his dwelling, that is, those who dwell in heaven (Rev 13:1, 5-6).
>
> . . . and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast which was full of blasphemous names (17:3).

Parallel passages of Scripture shed light on the nature of this blasphemy:

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[1] Note the allusions to Moses and Jeremiah in the description of the "two witnesses"--Moses a symbol of the law, and Jeremiah of the prophets (11:3-6, cf. Jer 5:14).

> He shall speak words against the Most High . . . and shall think to change the times and the law (Dan 7:25 [cf. vv. 8, 11]; this verse is the source of Rev. 13:5-7).
>
> He shall exalt himself and magnify himself above every god and shall speak astonishing things against the God of gods (Dan 11:36; this verse parallels Dan 7:25).
>
> . . . the man of lawlessness . . . opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God (2 Th 2:3; an allusion to Dan 11:36).

The blasphemy of the beast thus consists of reviling God and His saints (Rev 13:6), attempting to change God's law (Dan 7:25), and assuming divine titles and powers (Dan 11:36; 2 Th 2:3). The blasphemous names (Rev 13:1; 17:3) are thus titles of God.[1]

That the beast does indeed usurp the place of God is shown in its "totalitarian demand for that absolute allegiance which is due to God alone"[2]—the demand for worship (13:12) to which God alone is entitled (14:7) and which even angels refuse to accept (19:10; 22:8-9). It not only demands worship, but it presumes to set the mark of its character upon all who worship it (13:16), a prerogative of God alone who sets the seal of His character upon His people (3:12; 7:3; 14:1). It assumes authority over all men (13:7) with the power to take life (v. 15). The harlot woman seduces kings and nations to commit fornication with her (17:2; 18:3) when they were made for union with God (19:7).

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[1] "Blasphemy in Revelation refers always to a denial of the sovereignty of God. Thus in 13:1 and 17:3 the 'names of blasphemy' are the imperial titles, such as 'dominus et deus noster,' which attribute divinity to the emperor" (Hanson, Wrath of Lamb, p. 177). Note that the Roman emperors were not the only ones who assumed divine titles.

[2] Caird, Revelation, p. 37.

Abomination. The word abomination (bdelygma) and its cognates, occurring several times in Revelation, bears a heavy freight of meaning from other portions of Scripture, especially those dealing with Antichrist. In the Old Testament bdelygmata are abominations linked with heathenism such as the worship of idols and demons (Dt 29:17; 2 Ki 23:24; Isa 66:3; Jer 7:30), and the sorcery, human sacrifices, and sexual sins so often connected with heathen worship (Lev 18:26-29; Dt 18:9; 1 Ki 14:24; 2 Ki 16:3; 21:2, 11).[1] Israel brought abominations into the temple and defiled it (Ezek 5:11). The "abomination of desolation" is the name given by Jesus (taken from Dan 9:27; 11:31; 12:11, whence 1 Mac 1:54) to describe the Antichrist power that defiles and destroys the holy place. It is the ultimate idolatry of self-deification--man "standing in the holy place" (Mt 24:15), the "lawless one" sitting in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God (2 Th 2:4). The words "showing himself that he is God" imply a formal claim to occupy the central seat in men's minds which belongs to God alone.[2]

Following are the uses of bdelygma and its cognates in the Apocalypse:

> The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and bedecked with gold and jewels and pearls, holding in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the impurities of her fornication; and on her forehead was written a name of mystery: "Babylon the great, mother of harlots and of earth's abominations" (17:4-5).
>
> Nothing unclean shall enter [the city], nor any one who practices abomination or falsehood (21:27).
>
> But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the polluted, as for

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[1] Werner Foerster, "Bdelygma," TDNT 1:599.

[2] Ford, Abomination of Desolation, p. 244.

> murderers, fornicators, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their lot shall be in the lake that burns with fire and sulphur (21:8).

In these cases, the word abomination is associated with fornication, harlotry, and uncleanness, all terms having to do with religious unfaithfulness[1]—or putting someone else in the place of God. This is idolatry, false worship. The sin of Antichrist is perpetuated in every human being who enshrines another god, whether self (3:17; 18:7), or idols (9:20; 21:8), or demons (9:20; 18:2), or Antichrist (13:4) in the soul-temple which is meant to be the dwelling place of God (1 Cor 6:19; Rev 3:20).

Immorality and eating food offered to idols

Three of the seven churches of the Apocalypse had to deal with the false teachings of the Nicolaitans that it was permissible to eat food sacrificed to idols and practice immorality (2:6, 14, 20). In Ephesus their deeds were hated; in Pergamum some held their doctrine; in Thyatira their teaching was tolerated.[2]

Irenaeus asserts that the Nicolaitans were heretical followers of Nicolaus, the proselyte from Antioch, one of the seven deacons appointed by the apostles in Jerusalem (Acts 6:5).[3] Hippolytus supports Irenaeus in declaring that Nicolaus departed from correct doctrine.[4]

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[1] See section entitled "Immorality and eating food offered to idols."

[2] Beck, "Nicolaitans," IDB 3:547.

[3] Irenaeus, Against Heresies I 26.3 in The Ante-Nicene Fathers (10 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1913), 1:352 (hereafter cited as ANF).

[4] Hippolytus, The Refutation of All Heresies VII. 24 in ANF 5:115. See also Beck, "Nicolaitans," p. 548.

At Thyatira the followers of Jezebel claimed to know "the deep things of Satan" (Rev 2:24). This claim to special knowledge of deep mysteries[1] marks the incipient Gnosticism which would flourish a century later.[2]

Some scholars believe the Nicolaitans were primitive Gnostics of the same kind who plagued the church at Corinth in Paul's day.[3] The two sins of idolatry and immorality were special problems to the early church (Acts 15:20) and were condemned by Paul in his letters to the Corinthians (1 Cor 7-10). The Gnostic believed that he contained within himself the spark of the divine Spirit which was imprisoned in the flesh. The knowledge (gnōsis) that he contained the divine Spirit within him guaranteed him salvation from the demons who controlled the material world of evil, and guaranteed his return to the celestial world of light and the divine Spirit.[4] Since the Gnostic believed that only the Spirit within him had value, he could show his negative attitude toward the flesh in one of two ways: by strict asceticism he could avoid any contamination of his spiritual substance by the flesh; or, in the consciousness of the invulnerability of the Spirit within him, he could demonstrate his liberty by indulging in unrestrained libertinism. Thus, asceticism and libertinism were two expressions of Gnostic belief.[5] It was the libertine expression that afflicted the Corinthians and the churches of Revelation.

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[1]Irenaeus, Heresies II. 2. 2. [2]Beck, "Nicolaitans," p. 548.

[3]Fiorenza, "Apocalyptic and Gnōsis," pp. 572-574; Schmithals, Gnosticism in Corinth, pp. 221-227.

[4]Schmithals, Gnosticism in Corinth, pp. 150; 179-182.

[5]Ibid., p. 219.

It is typically Gnostic to participate in pagan cultic meals from a deliberately "Christian" stance. The Gnostic is strong, since the demons have been conquered. According to Irenaeus:

> They eat heathen sacrifices without hesitation and do not believe that they are defiled by it, and at every festival of the heathen and every banquet in honor of the idols they are the first to appear.[1]

> They who immoderately serve the lusts of the flesh, however, also assert that one must offer what is sarkical (fleshly) to the sarkical and what is pneumatic (spiritual) to the pneumatic.[2]

> They teach that it is of no significance when one practices adultery or eats meat sacrificed to idols.[3]

This perverse doctrine that advocated the most debasing sins--idolatrous feasting and immorality—called forth the divine wrath (Rev 2:16, 22-23).

It is possible, however, that a deeper meaning is intended here. Since the language of the book is symbolic, it could be that the sins of eating foods offered to idols and immorality are also symbolic. The Nicolaitan heresy is described as "the teaching of Balaam" (2:14) and as toleration of "the woman Jezebel" (v. 20). Thus three names—Nicolaitans, Balaam, and Jezebel are used to describe one heresy. The significance of the term Nicolaitans has been described; it remains to be discovered what is meant by Balaam and Jezebel.

Balaam, an Aramaean soothsayer (Num 22:5; Jos 13:22), after being frustrated in his effort to destroy Israel through divination (Dt 23:4-5), achieved their ruin through counseling heathen women to seduce them into sin (Num 31:15, 16; 25:1-5). He "put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, that they might eat food sacrificed to

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[1] Irenaeus, Against Heresies I. 6. 3.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid., I 26. 3.

idols and practice immorality" (Rev 2:14). His subversion of Israel through enticing them into Baal worship was developed in the Jewish midrash to make him the father of religious syncretism.[1] Balaam, then, becomes a symbol of the union of God's people with false religion.

The name Jezebel has the same connotation: the seduction of God's people into heathen religion. "[Ahab] took for wife Jezebel, the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshiped him" (1 Ki 16:31). Jezebel introduced Baal worship into Israel (1 Ki 16:32; 18:19).

Thus, the names of Balaam and Jezebel both suggest religious syncretism—the union of false religion with the true.

The sins of eating food sacrificed to idols and practicing immorality (2:14, 20) likewise point to the same evil. By eating food offered to idols, the worshiper became one with the god he worshiped (1 Cor 10:20-22). Immorality (fornication or adultery) also means becoming one with a false god or religion (Ex 34:16; Lev 17:7; 20:5; Dt 31:16). The word porneuein (to commit adultery) with its cognates and Hebrew equivalents is used in Scripture to mean religious infidelity—unfaithfulness to the true God by attachments to false gods (Hos 1-3; Isa 1:21; Jer 2-3; Isa 57:7-10; Eze 16, 23).

It appears, then, that the sin the Revelator attacks is more than a literal eating of food offered to idols, or sexual immorality: rather, it points to the adulteration of true religion with the false.[2]

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[1] Caird, Revelation, p. 39.

[2] Hauck and Schulz call "the great whore," with her sin of porne, "the epitome of apostasy from the one true God and of the unavoidably related syncretistic intercourse with other gods" (Friedrich Hauck and Siegfried Schulz, s.v. "Porne," TDNT 6: 594-595).

was this actually a problem with the early Christian church? History records that after the period of persecution represented by the church of Smyrna, when Christianity became the state religion, pagan practices were introduced into the church.[1] Furthermore, attempts were made early in Christian history to syncretize Christianity with Greek philosophy. Platonism exerted a great influence: its views of the nature of ultimate reality, of the immortality of the soul, of the Demiurge were especially attractive to Christians. An eclectic spirit characterized the first centuries of the Christian era, an acceptance of that part of the truth that might be found in each of the philosophical schools.[2] This eclecticism could constitute spiritual adultery, a mixing of the holy religion with the false that led to the development of the great apostasy.

Another form of _pornē_ (immorality) in the Apocalypse is the fornication of the harlot woman with the kings and people of the earth (Rev 17:2, 4; 18:3, 9; 14:8), first suggested in the figure of Jezebel and her paramours (2:20-22). This form of adultery is not the mixing of true and false religion but the union of religion with government. When kings (representing the state) unite with the harlot (representing the church), they are used by her in the work of persecuting the saints (17:6, 12-14).

God's judgments will be poured out upon all who unite with the harlot. Fornicators and idolaters will have their lot in the lake that burns with fire and sulphur (21:8); fornicators are excluded from the

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[1] White, _Great Controversy_, pp. 49-50.

[2] Justo L. Gonzalez, _A History of Christian Thought_, 3 vols. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1970), 1:49-50, 52.

holy city (22:15). The people of God by contrast "have not defiled themselves with women"--the harlot and her daughters (17:5)--"for they are virgins" (14:4, AV). As the Bride of the Lamb (19:7-8) they have kept themselves pure for Him.[1]

Falsehood

Deception of any kind is a sin that calls forth the wrath of God. All liars will have their lot in the lake of fire (21:8); nothing unclean will enter the city, nor anyone who practices falsehood (21:27).

The churches have to beware of "those who call themselves apostles but are not," or "say they are Jews and are not, but lie" (2:9; 3:9; cf. "Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess," 2:20). Ephesus excluded the false teaching (2:2-3, 6); Pergamum gave it entry (v. 14); Thyatira tolerated, if not embraced, it (v. 20). Thus, the church was led into apostasy.

Satan is the prime deceiver, whose lifelong work is to "deceive the nations" (20:3). His agent, the "false prophet," deceives those who dwell on the earth: by means of signs and wonders he leads the world to unite with the antichrist powers (19:20). In the final battle of earth's history, Satan is able to deceive the nations into launching an attack on the city and saints of God (20:9). His deceptions incite mankind to rebellion against God that leads to destruction (ibid.).

Satan's deceptions are successful because they are counterfeits of the true. In place of the Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

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[1]For this interpretation of 14:4, see Devine, "Virgin Followers," pp. 3-5: "The 144,000 are virgins in this sense that they are not given over to the worship of pagan idols especially to that of the beast." See also Ladd, Revelation, p. 191; Mounce, Revelation, p. 270.

[1:4-5]), he sets up the antitrinity of dragon, beast, and false prophet (19:20; 20:2). He assumes the attributes of the Living One who died and is alive forevermore (1:18): he "was, and is not, and is to ascend" (17:8, 11). Did the Son of man descend into Hades and rise up out of it (1:18)? He descends into the bottomless pit and arises from it (17:8). Was the Lamb slain (5:6)? He was "wounded unto death" (13:3). He counterfeits the Lamb itself (13:11) but his dragonlike voice betrays him (ibid.). Through the "false prophet" he counterfeits the signs and miracles of God's true prophets, making fire come down from heaven (13:13; cf. 11:5). He demands worship (13:15) as God demands worship (14:7), setting a mark upon the foreheads of men (13:16-17) as God sets His seal upon men (14:1).[1]

It is the resemblance of the Antichrist to the Christ, of false worship to the true, of counterfeit signs and wonders to the genuine, that makes error deceptive. Lies flourish only as parasites on truth. Another type of deception mentioned in the Apocalypse is tampering with the Word of God: adding to or taking away from the words of the book (22:18-19). God hates falsehood and deception because it destroys the lives of men. He, on the contrary, is the God of truth (3:14); His people have no lie in their mouth (14:5).

Evil Character in the Church

Spiritual declension

The sins of the saints, outside of the Nicolaitan problem already discussed, can best be described under the heading of spiritual entropy—a running down, a decline, a loss of power. According to the

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[1]See Ford, "Abomination of Desolation," pp. 236-237, 310.

messages to the seven churches, Ephesus had lost its first love (2:4), Sardis was nearly dead (3:1-2), and Laodicea was lukewarm (3:15-16).

The causes of their spiritual decline are implied in the contexts.

Ephesus was preoccupied with heresy hunting, perhaps as a result of Paul's warning against "fierce wolves" who would speak "perverse things, to draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20:29-31). This warning, given to the leaders of the Ephesus church, had been cherished and heeded. The Ephesian Christians could not bear evil men (Rev 2:2); they had "tested those who call themselves apostles but are not, and found them to be false" (ibid.); they had hated the works of the Nicolaitans (v. 6). But their hatred of heresy had cooled their love for Christ (v. 4). Their early fervor had degenerated into a rigid orthodoxy.[1]

To Sardis came the message, "you have the name of being alive, and you are dead" (3:2). This is a "second generation" type of church, content to rest on the laurels of its predecessors. It had been "alive" and was content with its reputation. In its contentment it had dozed into a spiritual lethargy (note the need to "awake" [3:2]) and weakness (implied by the word "strengthen" [ibid.]) that made it vulnerable to sin, for the Sardians had "soiled their garments" (v. 4). This church was content with a hollow professionalism--a name--rather than a living relationship with God.

Laodicea's lukewarmness was caused by a self-righteousness

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[1] In contrast, Thyatira, while maintaining love (v. 19) had allowed heresy to flourish (v. 20). "How narrow is the safe path between the sin of tolerance and the sin of intolerance!" (Caird, Revelation, p. 41).

which projected a self-image exactly the reverse of reality. "You say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing; not knowing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked" (3:17). This church judged itself by externals--its profession and material wealth--but was bankrupt internally. Its bankruptcy was caused by the lack of gold tried in the fire (v. 18) which is faith (1 Pet 1:7). It was naked because it lacked the white garments (Rev 3:18) of the righteousness of Christ (Isa 61:10). It was blind (Rev 3:18) because it lacked the eye-salve of spiritual discernment. Most of all, it lacked the presence of Christ within (He was standing outside the door [v. 20]). Its pride ("I am rich") and self-sufficiency ("I need nothing") were dangerous attitudes, because pride feels no need. The figure of lukewarmness is intended to suggest uselessness: hot and cold water are beneficial for refreshment and therapeutic value, but lukewarm water is repulsive either for drinking or bathing.[1]

All three churches had suffered a decline in the commitment, love, and earnestness that mark the true Christian. They had "fallen" from a previous "high" (2:4). A "fall" can lead not only to apathy but to apostasy and hostility to God, as seen in fallen Babylon (18:2).

Summary: Evil Character in the Apocalypse

Sin in the Apocalypse conveys the religious meaning of hatred toward the person of God and persecution of His people. Sin is the refusal to worship God, and the substitution of self, idols, and demonic powers as objects of worship. Sin propagates itself through deception--by counterfeiting truth and mixing truth with error. It is

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[1] Rudwick and Green, "Laodicean Lukewarmness," pp. 176-178.

disloyalty to God shown by coldness and falling away from Him.

While the conflict between good and evil is depicted in the Apocalypse as occurring on a cosmic scale, it is also repeated in the microcosm of the human heart.

Righteous Character: Its Distinctive Marks

Righteous character in the Apocalypse contrasts sharply with evil character. In place of hostility to God there is devotion. Persecution is confronted with patient endurance. Deceitfulness is countered by trustworthiness. Following are qualities and qualifiers used to describe righteous character.

Virtues or qualities

Patient endurance

Patient endurance (hypomonē) is by far the most prominent characteristic of the saints in the Apocalypse, being mentioned seven times. It is appropriate that "the martyr's book" should extol this virtue since it is so necessary in facing tribulation.[1]

Hypomonē has both active and passive content. Passively it means patience, the ability to wait, to endure delay (Rev 13:10); in a parallel verse, the martyrs are told to "rest a little longer" before vengeance would be meted out upon their enemies (6:11). In a world where evil triumphs and right is trampled to the ground (as described in apocalyptic literature), the saints must be patient until wrongs are righted by the direct intervention of God.

But the word is more than passive; it denotes an active response to tribulation. In classical Greek, hypomonē as a virtue is

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[1] Friedrich Hauck, "Hypomenō," TDNT 4:588.

classified under andreia which means manliness (from anēr, man), courage, bravery.[1] It meant courageous endurance which manfully defies evil; active and energetic resistance to hostile power.[2] The biblical use includes this active sense of "masculine constancy in trial,"[3] "the brave patience with which the Christian contends against the . . . persecutions and temptations that befall him in his conflict with the inward and outward world."[4]

> It is not the patience which can sit down and passively endure until the storm is past. It is the spirit which can bear things not simply with resignation, but with blazing hope . . .[5] because it knows that these things are leading to a goal of glory.

Hypomonē can be a dismal or triumphant experience, depending upon the spiritual state of believers. To the Ephesians, who had lost their first love, patient endurance was associated with trouble and hard labor (2:2-3). But John saw his endurance of exile on Patmos not only as tribulation but as sharing the kingdom (1:9). To the church of Thyatira, hypomonē was radiated with love and faith and service (2:19). Hypomonē also looks forward to triumph over God's enemies. Two passages which vividly describe the divine retribution (going into captivity, being slain with the sword [13:10], being tormented with fire and brimstone [14:10-11] are immediately followed by the assertion, "Here is the patient endurance of the saints" (13:10; 14:12). This implies that the saints can patiently endure persecution,

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[1]Bauer, Greek-English Lexicon, s.v. "andreios"; Hauck, "Hypomenō," p. 582; William Barclay, A New Testament Wordbook (New York: Harper & Bros., n.d.), p. 60.

[2]Hauck, "Hypomenō," pp. 581-582. [3]Barclay, NT Wordbook, p. 60.

[4]Richard C. Trench, Synonyms of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948), p. 197.

[5]Barclay, NT Wordbook, p. 60.

because of the assurance that their persecutors will be punished.

Though there is some ambiguity in the text, the Apocalypse appears to teach that Jesus sets the example in patient endurance. John with his brethren is a partner in tribulation, the kingdom, and patient endurance "in Jesus" (1:9). Hence John is a participant in the sufferings and patience of Jesus. Again, the expression "Because you have kept the word of my patient endurance" (3:10) means that the saints had kept the teaching which centered in the patience of Christ (cf. 2 Th 3:5; Heb 12:2). The patience of the saints is thus a reflection of the patience of Christ.[1]

Love

Though love does not have the prominent place in the Apocalypse that it does in the Johannine gospel and epistles, it is mentioned both on the Godward and manward side.

The Ephesians are rebuked for their loss of love (Rev 2:4) and the Thyatirans are commended for their love (2:19). It is notable, however, that in the love relationship between Christ and His people the divine love was prior, making human love a response to divine love:

> [Jesus Christ] loves us (Greek, "keeps on loving us") and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and made us a kingdom, priests to his God (1:5-6).

The love described here is disinterested and undeserved, a love for unlovely sinners. It is self-sacrificing love: it revealed itself at the cost of blood.[2] The saints reflect this self-sacrificing love:

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[1] Swete, Revelation, p. 56. This can also be translated "my word of patient endurance" which would mean Jesus' exhortation to patient endurance as in Rev. 13:10, 14:12, or Mt 24:13.

[2] Mounce, "Christology," p. 45.

> And they conquered [Satan] by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death (12:11).

Love for Christ here transcends love of life itself, so that the saints are willing to follow their Redeemer in making the ultimate sacrifice.

The same passage (1:5-6) alludes to the Sinai Covenant[1] which throws more light on the love relationship between God and His people. In the covenant with Israel, God "set His love upon" them (Dt 7:7-9) and required total love in return (6:5). As in the Sinai covenant, true love issues in works of obedience (Rev 2:4-5, 19; cf. Dt 13:3-4). Though works can be present without love (Rev 2:2-4), love will always produce good works. And as love grows, these works will exceed the previous works (2:19). Those whose love had diminished are commanded to do the works they did at the first (2:5) in the height of their first love. First love should not represent the peak of love, but should lead to ever-ascending heights. Yet Christ seems content that Ephesus return to its first love (2:5).

Christ is the source of the love which He demands. The expression of His tenderest love is reserved for the church whom He rebukes the most: "As many as I love (philō) I rebuke and chasten (paideuō, from pais, child—hence, to discipline as a father trains a child). The verb for love here signifies warm, tender affection, in contrast to the more principled agapē love. Our Lord produces love in the heart of the believer by entering the heart Himself and living with His host in most intimate fellowship (3:20).

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[1] Sinai allusions are found in the reference to the kingdom of priests (cf. Ex 19:6), in the word "freed" which suggests freedom from Egyptian bondage (Dt 7:8), and "blood," which calls to mind the Passover blood (Ex 12:13).

Thus love as a characteristic of the saints is a response to, and reflection of, the love of Christ.

Fear

Fear in the Apocalypse, used to describe the righteous and wicked, can be both good and evil. Fear is caused by the majesty of Christ as seen in vision (1:12-17) and at His coming (1:7; 6:16-17), the prospect of persecution (2:10), God's dramatic vindication of His witnesses (11:11), the coming of the hour of judgment (14:7), the revealing of God's plague judgments (15:4), and the holiness of God as seen in His judgments (ibid.).

Three kinds of fear are mentioned. One is the fear of suffering which leads to cowardice. Of the eight types of sinners who will be cast into the lake of fire, the first is the cowardly, followed by the faithless (21:8), the two undoubtedly being related. In the context of the Revelation, the cowardly are those who in time of persecution have, under fear of suffering, denied the faith.[1] As one cause of cowardice is faithlessness (21:8), the remedy is in maintaining faith even until death (2:10). The fear of suffering is forbidden (2:10) as worry and anxiety are forbidden in other New Testament texts (Mt 6:25; Php 4:6). Another cause of cowardice is the love of this life. The martyrs "loved not their lives even unto death" (12:11); the persecuted Smyrnans were exhorted to fix their gaze on the crown of life (2:10) to be awarded after death.

Another kind of fear may be called "epiphany fear,"[2] the terror

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[1]Trench, Synonyms of NT, p. 35.

[2]Horst Balz, s.v. "Phobeō," TDNT 9:209.

man feels in the presence of God. The encounter with the Lord of creation, in whom all saving and destructive powers are combined, constitutes an imperiling of existence against which there is no protection.[1] The wicked react to the presence of the glorified Christ by wailing (1:7) and calling for the mountains and rocks to hide them from His face (6:16). The presence of God to them speaks wrath (v. 17). Yet the holiest of men are stricken with fear at the presence of God. John fell as dead in the presence of the glorified Christ (1:17). Such fear is marked by a sense of one's own nothingness in the presence of the consuming holiness.[2] Jesus laid His hand upon John, telling him not to fear, and presenting His own all-sufficiency through death and resurrection (1:17-18) as the answer to John's nothingness.

The third and most prevalent use of fear in the Apocalypse has to do with the "fear of the Lord" ("fear God" [14:7], "fear him" [19:5], "fear . . . thy name" [15:4]). This concept occurs all through the Bible to describe the personal relationship of man with God. Fear is the human correlate of the divine holiness (Gen 28:17), the profound awareness of the terrifying otherness of the divine nature.[3] Yet in the fear of God there is also included the idea of trust.[4] The fear of the Lord is shown by walking in all God's ways, loving Him, serving Him with all the heart, and keeping His commandments (Dt 10:12). Thus fear is intertwined with love, obedience, and service. The fear of God

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[1] Walther Eichrodt, Theology of OT, 2:270.

[2] Ibid. [3] Ibid., pp. 268, 270.

[4] Abraham's experience offering Isaac shows the self-commitment which is ready for the most extreme demands, and which bestows on the true fear of God the character of unconditional trust even in the face of His uncomprehended will (Gen 22:12; Eichrodt, Theology of OT, 2:275).

leads to a striving after inner unity with the will of God that develops an intense personal relationship with Him.[1]

In the Apocalypse, the fear of God is expressed through glorifying, worshiping, and praising Him (14:7; 15:4; 19:5). Since "God-fearers" (hoi phoboumenoi auton) is a general term for the saints (11:18; 19:5), their other characteristics in the Apocalypse may be included in the fear of God. The saints' fear of God is a constant attitude (11:18; 19:5, indicated by the present tense in the Greek), whereas the world is invited to begin to fear Him (14:7, indicated by an ingressive aorist).

Thus righteous character is marked by the fear of God, which is expressed not only in awe and dread and a sense of one's nothingness, but in love, obedience, and praise.

Faith

Faith can mean belief and trust in a person; as such it is the leading term for the relation of man to God.[2] It can also mean the content of faith (what is believed), that is, the doctrine about Christ (Rom 10:9; 1 Th 4:14).[3] In its latter meaning it is not a component of righteous character and hence is not relevant here.

Of the four occurrences of faith in the Apocalypse, two are ambiguous and could have either of the two meanings listed above. They are as follows:

> "You hold fast my name and you did not deny my faith . . . ." (Rev 2:13).

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[1]Ibid., p. 274.

[2]Rudolph Bultmann, s.v. "Pisteuō," TDNT 6:205.

[3]Ibid., p. 209.

> Here is a call for the endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus (14:12).

Regarding 2:13, Swete and Bauer interpret "my faith" as the believer's faith in Christ (tēn pistin mou: faith of me, meaning faith in me).[1] The significance for this study would be that the believers were able to maintain faith in Christ at a time of persecution when life was in danger. They could have denied their faith and thus safeguarded their lives; by holding firmly to their faith they demonstrated the courageous nature of true faith. Faith is a total response to God that is willing to risk all for Him. However, it is possible to understand faith in 2:13 as the doctrine about Christ: the believers held fast to the doctrine of Christ in the face of persecution.[2]

Similarly, in 14:12 "the faith of Jesus" can mean "the faith which has Jesus for its object," "reliance on Jesus."[3] Lenski, however, sees it as an explication of "the commandments of God" which to him include the whole will of God in gospel and law. The saints treasure "the faith" in the sense of the doctrine which originates from Jesus.[4]

In interpreting these passages, no commentator suggests a third meaning for "the faith of Jesus," that is, the faith which Jesus exercised. If this meaning were possible, then Jesus would be an example to the believers in faith as well as in other qualities. Since John is

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[1] Revelation, p. 35; Greek-English Lexicon, s.v. pistis.

[2] Lenski, Revelation, p. 105.

[3] Swete, Revelation, p. 187; Mounce, Revelation, p. 277.

[4] Lenski, Revelation, p. 439.

a master of the double entendre,[1] it is possible that he intended more than one meaning in the verses above.

The two other "faith" texts in Revelation refer clearly to the faith of the saints.

Jesus commended the Thyatirans for their "love and faith and service and patient endurance," stating that their "latter works exceed the first" (2:19). Swete notes the Johannine primacy of love as the motive force for Christian activity, though faith is not omitted.[2] Love and faith[3] are the motives for service and endurance, and they issue in good works. Faith in John, as in Paul, includes the concept of obedience: it leads to ever-increasing good works (Rev 2:19; cf. Rom 1:5; 16:26). Faith is the decisive force behind the moral life.[4]

The final text on faith is: "Here is [a call for] the endurance and faith of the saints" (Rev 13:10). Those who take up the sword against God's people will be killed with the sword (ibid.), but endurance and faith are required in awaiting that day. Meanwhile the beast has unlimited power to persecute. This will require that the

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[1]See Jn 3:3 where anōthen can mean from above or again; Rev 22:1 and 17, where "water of life" has a literal and spiritual meaning; Jn 9:39 of literal and spiritual blindness, etc.

[2]The Pauline order is "faith and love" (1 Th 3:6; 1 Tim 1:14; 2:15, etc.; Swete, Revelation, p. 42).

[3]Love and faith could be the equivalents of the Heb. ḥesed and ʾemeth (steadfast love and faithfulness) which, when they occur together mean an attitude of mutual loyalty within the covenant (cf. Gen 24:27; 32:10; 47:29; Nelson Glueck, Ḥesed in the Bible, trans. Alfred Gottschalk [Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1967] pp. 71-73). Whenever ḥesed and ʾemeth appear together, they are to be regarded as a hendiadys, in which ʾemeth has the value of an explanatory adjective, emphasizing the quality of loyalty inherent in ḥesed (ibid., p. 72). Applied to Rev 2:19, the text would say, "I know your loyalty."

[4]Eichrodt, Theology of OT, 2:286.

saints have unswerving faith that God will act in their behalf.[1] Here faith takes on the Old Testament character of waiting on God, trusting Him to act in His own good time (Ps 27:13-14; 62:5, 8).

Thus in Revelation faith as an attribute of the saints contains the qualities of reliance, trust, obedience, loyalty, and patience.

Adjectives

Faithful

Related to "faith" is "faithful," which means trustworthy, dependable, inspiring trust or faith.[2] It is used six times in the Apocalypse, three in connection with Christ, and three in connection with the saints. Jesus is the model of faithfulness which the saints emulate:

1. Jesus is faithful in witnessing (1:5; 3:14); so are they (2:13).

2. He is faithful unto death (1:5); so are they (2:10; 2:13).[3]

3. He is faithful in warfare (the execution of justice, 19:11); so are they (17:14; cf. 19:14).

Jesus was faithful in witness--in communicating the revelation from God (1:1-2). His faithful witness to the divine character led Him to demonstrate a love that led to His death (1:5). His faithfulness in witness is to be mirrored in His followers who witness to the world of the love of God even to the point of their death. Jesus was wholly faithful in His commitment to mankind to the extent of giving His life.

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[1]Ladd, Revelation, p. 182.

[2]Bauer, Greek-English Lexicon, s.v. "pistos."

[3]It is to be noted that the witnessing and the dying are often connected: i.e., one witnesses by dying.

They are redeemed in order to be wholly faithful to God to the extent of giving their lives.[1] Their faithfulness (2:10, 13) and love (19) are a response to His faithfulness and love (1:5).

Holy

Properly the quality of holiness belongs to God and describes the divine "otherness" that is unique to Him.[2] It is applied to persons and things in a derivative sense by virtue of their relationship to God.[3] Thus holy (hagios) is used in the Apocalypse not only to describe God and Christ (3:7; 4:8; 6:10) but also the city (11:2; 21:2, 10-11; 22:19), the angels (14:10), and the people of God (20:6; 22:11; see also "saints"). In the derived sense, the basic idea of "holy" is separation[4] in the sense of consecration and devotion to the service of the Deity.[5] The verb hagiazein means to consecrate, dedicate, sanctify--i.e., include in the inner circle of what is holy.[6] Holiness implies a dual separation: separation to God (Ex 13:2; 29:44; cf. Acts 13:2) and separation from the world and its defilement (Lev 20:6-7). It rapidly takes on moral as well as religious significance: the one separated to God is to be holy as God is holy (Lev 11:44) while at the same time he is to be separate from defilement and sin.

In the Apocalypse, the "holy" who take part in the first

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[1]LaRondelle, Perfection, p. 45.

[2]Snaith, Distinctive Ideas of OT, p. 30.

[3]Aune, "St. John's Portrait," pp. 133-134.

[4]Snaith, Distinctive Ideas of OT, p. 25, 29-30.

[5]Trench, Synonyms of NT, p. 331.

[6]Bauer, Greek-English Lexicon, s.v. "hagiazō."

resurrection are contrasted with those who suffer the second death (20:6) who are depicted as "cowardly, faithless, polluted, murderers, fornicators, sorcerers, idolaters, and liars" (21:8). This contrast implies that the "holy" are faithful to God (i.e., not "faithless," "fornicators," "polluted," or "idolaters," that is, entering into relationship with false gods, whether self, idols, demons, the beast, etc.), as well as ethically moral (i.e., not murderers, fornicators, or liars).

It is God who makes man holy: Rev 22:12 is literally translated "let the holy still be made holy"--i.e., by God and not by self.[1]

Related to "holy" is the word "saints" (hoi hagioi, the holy ones), repeatedly used in the Revelation. By the time the book was written, the word had come to mean Christian community or Christians.[2]

The designation saints was used in the Old Testament to describe Israel as God's people (Dt 7:6) and in New Testament times was applied to the Christian community (1 Pet 1:15-16; 2:9). Christians are saints by virtue of being "in Christ Jesus" (Phil 1:1) who is "the Holy One" (Acts 3:14).[3] Saints were by no means perfect (e.g., 1 Cor 1:2, 10; 3:1; 6:1-2, etc.) but were constantly exhorted to overcome sin in their lives (Eph 5:3). The meaning of saints is not moral perfection but consecration to Christ--a Christian appropriation of the Old Testament sense of separation.[4]

In Revelation, the saints are defined as those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus (14:12). Here the moral and

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[1] Otto Procksch, "Hagios," TDNT 1:110.

[2] G. W. H. Lampe, "Saint," IDB 4:164-165.

[3] Ibid.

[4] E. C. Blackman, "Sanctification," IDB 4:211.

religious demands of holiness are combined: the saints obey God's law and cling by faith to Jesus. As with the saints in Daniel, they are persecuted (Rev 13:7; 16:6; 17:6; 18:24; cf. Dan 7:21, 25) and vindicated (Rev 11:18; 20:4; cf. Dan 7:18, 22, 27). The saints in the Apocalypse do righteous deeds (19:8), illustrating in their lives the religious and moral dimensions of the word "holy."

Thus "holy," in describing the character of the saints, means having a personal relationship with God through consecration to Him, and living an ethical life of obedience to His commandments.

Righteous

In the two instances in the Apocalypse where "righteous" (dikaios and its cognates) is applied to the saints, it has the meaning of doing righteous deeds.[1]

"Righteous" and "righteousness" in the Bible mean fulfilling the divine will as expressed in the law (Mt 5:17-20; Rom 2:13; 8:4)[2] through being in a covenant relationship with God (Gen 17:1; Dt 6:1-6, 25; Heb 8:10).[3] The covenant relationship, rooted in deliverance from sin (Rev 1:5), blossoms into a life of loving obedience (2:19; 14:12). In the Johannine writings righteousness is always connected with Christ, the Righteous One (1 Jn 2:29; 3:7; Rev 22:11-14);[4] the believer obtains righteousness through union with Him (Jn 15:4).

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[1]Note: when applied to God dikaios means being just in His judgments.

[2]Schrenk, "Dikē," TDNT 2:190; Bauer, Greek-English Lexicon, s.v. "dikaios."

[3]See E. Achtemeier, "Righteousness in OT" pp. 81-82; Paul J. Achtemeier, "Righteousness in the New Testament," IDB 4:91-92.

[4]Schrenk, "Dikē," p. 200.

In Hebrew thought, righteousness was not an abstraction, but concrete deeds, specific acts, capable of exact description, fixed in time and space.[1] Righteousness was something that happened (Ps 72:1-4). The plural form means "righteous acts." Hence John, who used the Hebrew idiom, describes the bridal gown of the Lamb's wife as her "righteous acts" (dikaiōmata):

> It was granted her to be clothed with fine linen, bright and pure--for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints (Rev 19:8).

What these righteous deeds were can be deduced from the rest of the book, where the "works" of the church were described as patient endurance (2:2), love, faith, and service (2:19), keeping the commandments of God, bearing testimony of Jesus, and maintaining faith in Him (12:17; 14:12).

Furthermore, the decree which forever fixes the character of men states, "Let . . . the righteous still do right" (22:11). Character is not only a matter of being (as "Let . . . the holy still be holy" [ibid.]), but of doing, though the being (they are "righteous") precedes the doing. The decree of 22:11 states that the righteous will forever continue to do the works of righteousness that have characterized their lives--keeping the commandments and holding to their faith in Jesus.

In the covenant relationship, the righteousness which God requires He first gives (1 Ki 8:58, 61; Ps 51:10; Jer 31:33; Dt 30:6; Ezek 11:19-20). He gives the clean heart, the right spirit, and the love that incline the heart to walk in His commandments.[2] So with the

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[1] Snaith, Distinctive Ideas of OT, p. 77

[2] LaRondelle, Perfection, p. 123.

"fine linen, bright and pure" of the bridal gown: it is supplied by God ["it was granted her" (Rev 19:8)]:

> But are the works a byssinon, a robe of fine linen, and even lampron, brilliant like a lamp, katharon, clean, pure, spotless? Is that not saying too much about them? Not according to Matt 5:14 as far as brilliance is concerned; not according to Eph 5:27 as far as cleanness and stainlessness are concerned. All the imperfections of our good works are made good by the perfect righteousness of Christ which is ours from the very start. So we "are clean every whit" (John 13:10).[1]

Thus "righteous" character is described in the Apocalypse in terms of doing righteousness, which means patiently enduring suffering, keeping the commandments of God, bearing testimony to Jesus, and maintaining faith in Him. The ability to do this righteousness comes from Christ, who also covers any deficiencies with His righteousness.

Righteous Character as Expressed in the Life

How does righteous character express itself in everyday life according to the Apocalypse? What behaviors are seen as the fruitage of the Christ-like life? Character reaches its highest fulfillment when life has meaning, when the individual is involved in a cause greater than himself. This study reveals that the lives and characters of Christ and His saints have cosmic significance, leading to the highest development of alterocentric[2] behavior.

The behavior roles of the saints are described figuratively and literally in the Apocalypse, both aspects being considered here.

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[1] Lenski, Revelation, p. 543.

[2] Finding the center of one's life in others, in contrast to egocentric, centered in self (Carsten Johnsen, Man--the Indivisible [Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1971], p. 12).

The royal priesthood

In figurative terms the saints of the Apocalypse are described as exercising the dual role of priests and kings:

> [Jesus Christ has] made us a kingdom, priests[1] to his God and Father (Rev 1:6).
>
> [The Lamb has] made [men] a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on earth (5:10).
>
> They shall be priests of God and of Christ, and they shall reign with him a thousand years (20:6).

What is the meaning of the unusual expression, "a kingdom, priests"? Does it mean a kingdom whose subjects are all priests, or a sovereignty exercised by priests, or a nation of priests ruled over by a king, or priests who all rule as kings? The final meaning appears to be correct, for the saints are shown to exercise the role of kings as well as priests. Though they are called a kingdom rather than kings, it is clear that the idea of kings is present, for they will reign (5:10; 20:4, 6; cf. Dan 7:27; Rev 22:5), sit with Christ on His throne (3:21; cf. 20:4), and rule the nations with a rod of iron (2:26-27).[2]

The dual role of priest-kings appears several times in the book, perhaps finding its origin in the patriarchal system where the head of the clan (king) offered sacrifice as a priest, e.g., Abraham (Gen 12:8) and Melchizedek, king of Salem and priest of the Most High

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[1]Scholars have wrestled over the awkward expression "kingdom, priests" by trying to change the wording to "a kingdom and a priesthood" or "a kingdom and priests" (Swete, Revelation, p. 8). It is possible that John is thinking of the Hebrew genitive construct, bringing over the expression mamleketh kohanim directly into the Greek without use of the normal genitive case. The meaning would then be "kingdom of priests" as in Ex 19:6.

[2]"The redeemed are a kingdom because they shall reign upon the earth." "They are granted the right to rule with Christ. They are a kingdom, a nation of kings" [empnasis supplied]. (Ladd, The Gospel of the Kingdom, [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959], p. 117).

God (Heb 7:1; Gen 14:18). The twenty-four elders sit on thrones and wear crowns[1] as kings (Rev 4:4), while they offer incense (5:8) and worship God (11:16; 19:4) as priests. The priest-king connection is also seen in the "two witnesses" of chapter 11, an allusion to "the two anointed who stand by the Lord of the whole earth" of Zech 4:14, namely Joshua, the anointed priest, and Zerubbabel, the anointed king. These are symbols of the priest-king function of believers.[2] The supreme example of the priest-king in the Apocalypse is Jesus Himself, who appears as priest in the long robe, walking among the seven candlesticks (1:12-13) and offering incense with a golden censer before the altar (8:3-5),[3] who is also "King of kings and Lord of lords (17:14; 19:16; cf 1:5; 15:3; 11:15; 12:10).

What are the kingly and priestly roles of the saints and how do they relate to character? In the Apocalypse, all of the activities of the saints—witness, worship, service, prayer, self-sacrifice, judgment—can be seen as kingly or priestly functions. Sometimes the connection is explicitly stated, sometimes it is not. Sometimes the concept extends beyond the king-priest role. For this reason, the roles of the saints (and of other orders of the creation) will be

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[1]The word crown (stephanos) here is not the strongest word for kingly crown (diadēma), though kings did wear it (Rev 14:14). The commonest meaning is the wreath of victory, though in 4:4 it is a golden crown.

[2]Trites, NT Concept of Witness, pp. 164-165.

[3]Many commentators see this "angel" as Jesus, since it is He who ministers before God in behalf of the saints (Heb 7:25) (J. A. Seiss, The Apocalypse: a Series of Special Lectures on the Revelation of Jesus Christ, 2 vols. [New York: Charles C. Cook, 1906] 2:26-27; Ford C. Ottman, The Unfolding of the Ages [Fincastle, Va.: Scripture Truth, 1905] p. 201; Ellen G. White, Early Writings [Washington, D. C.: Review and Herald, 1882] pp. 32, 279).

listed independently, with connections made where indicated. Many of the concepts in the following discussion overlap each other but are treated separately because of the special vocabularies and shades of meaning involved.

Mission

The great cause which calls forth the exercise of every moral excellence in the saints is the mission of God to the universe. Every saint of the fallen and unfallen realms is included in this mission. The task is the proclamation of the everlasting gospel to "every nation and tribe and tongue and people" (14:6; 10:11). The message to be communicated is that God is worthy to reign because He created all things (4:11; 10:6; 14:7) and that Jesus Christ is worthy of total allegiance because He redeemed the rebellious world by His death (5:9, 12).

The divine purpose for this world since the election of Abraham has been the gathering of a universal covenant people to God. The purpose of election was mission.[1] Abraham was blessed to be a blessing to all the families of the earth (Gen 12:2-3). From the very families of earth that had been scattered and divided into many languages (Gen 10 and 11), God's purpose was to gather a people unto Himself. The final, eschatological gathering is to undo the original, primeval scattering. God is particular to have representatives from every nation, tribe, tongue, and people (Rev 7:9; cf. Dan 7:14).

The purpose of Israel's election as a people was mission to the world:

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[1] Milton, God's Covenant, p. 152.

> Now therefore, if you will obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my own possession among all peoples; for all the earth is mine, and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Ex 19:5-6).

This passage suggests not only a special place for Israel, but also a purpose for the other peoples, who also belong to God (v. 5). Israel was chosen as God's "own possession" to be a kingdom of priests to the rest of the world.[1] Peter confirms that the role of the "kingdom of priests" is mission:

> But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light (1 Pet 2:9).

The king-priest role of Rev 1:5, then, is mission to the world, the gathering of a people to God. Thus the 144,000 from the twelve tribes of Israel, standing opposite the "great multitude which no man could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and tongues" (7:9) represent the completion of Israel's mission to the world. Kings and nations bring their glory into the new Jerusalem (21:24, 26), thus fulfilling Isaiah's prophecy of the ingathering of nations to Zion (Isa 60:3-13).[2]

Witness

The words witness and testimony (martys, martyria, martyreō) occur repeatedly in the Apocalypse to describe the process of communicating the divine message.[3] The word has a forensic meaning, never far from its background of the lawcourt. "The Old Testament legal assembly helps to understand the forensic character of the apostolic

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[1] Milton, God's Covenant, p. 141.

[2] Du Preez, "Mission Perspective," p. 159.

[3] Trites, NT Concept of Witness, p. 1.

testimony."[1] Thus, the primary meaning of martyrein is to bear witness in the legal sense of the word.[2]

There is also a New Testament background to the lawcourt imagery of the Apocalypse. Not only was Jesus unjustly tried and condemned in Jewish and Roman lawcourts (Jn 18-19), but He predicted that His followers would receive the same treatment (15:20). The book of Revelation chronicles the fulfillment of this prediction, showing the unjust treatment endured by Christians as a result of their faithful witness before their accusers. John himself was tried and sentenced to exile on Patmos "for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Rev 1:9), and the martyrs died for the same reason (6:9, 20:4).[3] The book of Revelation indicates that God's heavenly court reverses the judgments of earthly courts (6:9-11).

The agents who witness. Revelation presents a chain of witnesses: God as the original source transmits His word to Jesus Christ, who testifies to it through His angel to the prophet, who then communicates it to the churches, who, in turn, proclaim it to the world (Rev 1:1-2, 11; 14:6). Jesus is thus the first of a chain of witnesses, transmitting the "word of God" to the prophet. The prophet and the saints are successive witnesses in the transmission of the divine message to the world.

The content of witness. Jesus, as the primary witness to the thoughts and purposes of God, is called "the faithful and true witness"

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[1]Ibid., p. 22. [2]Bauer, Greek-English Lexicon, s.v. "martys."

[3]Kenneth A. Strand, "Investigative Judgment in the Book of Revelation," Pacific Union Recorder, Oct. 13, 1980, p. 2.

(3:14; cf. 1:5). What is the content of His witness, called "the word of God and the testimony of Jesus" (1:2)? It is described as "what must soon take place" (1:1), "the prophecy" (1:3)--which is the book of Revelation itself (22:18). Included in the book is the full gospel: Christ's preincarnate purpose (13:8), His incarnation (12:5), death (1:5; 5:6, 9), resurrection (1:17-18), ascension (12:5), priestly ministry to the church (1:12-3:22), second coming (1:7; 19:11-16), judgments (11:18; 19:2), and reign (11:15; 19:15-16); also the message of salvation from sin (1:5; 7:10, 14) and death (21:4), with the bestowal of eternal life on His saints in a recreated earth (21:1; 22:1-5, 17).[1] Thus the testimony of Jesus includes all of the work and words of Jesus, focused on His death, for it is there that the word and acts of Christ, the teaching and the Person, become identical.[2] It is there that He is supremely "the faithful and true witness" (3:14; cf. 1:5). The testimony of Jesus could be called the gospel, paralleling the "little Apocalypse" which equates the gospel and the witness (Mt 24:14).

This treasure of truth, "the word of God and the testimony of Jesus," is the message entrusted to the saints which they not only hold and preserve (Rev 12:17; 19:10) but transmit to the world at the risk of persecution (1:9) and death (6:9; 11:6-7; 12:11; 20:4). Whoever keeps the word of Jesus, the chief "witness" to God, becomes a witness himself.[3] It is through the church that the world is confronted with

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[1]See Caird, Revelation, p. 296; Tenney, Revelation, p. 44.

[2]Trites, NT Concept of Witness, p. 158.

[3]Rissi, "Kerygma of Revelation," p. 13.

God. Church members individually (2:13) and collectively (11:3ff.) are witnesses to the world of the plan and purposes of God.

Method of witness. How does the church accomplish its witnessing? Some commentators see witness as martyrdom: Jesus witnessed to the world through His death (1:5) and martyrs witnessed through theirs (2:13; 6:9). Hence the word martys becomes martyr in the AV (2:13). However, the emphasis throughout the Revelation is witness communicated through speech: "they have conquered . . . by the word of their testimony" (12:11). "Let him who hears say 'Come'" (22:17). The basic meaning of the Greek martyria is witness communicated through speech. The saints are not called witnesses because they die, but they die because they are witnesses.[1] The Greek martys (witness) did not take on the meaning of martyr until the second century.[2]

The saints, then, are a part of the chain of communication of the redemptive message from God to the world. As witnesses, they must have firsthand knowledge and experience with the subject matter of their testimony. Theirs is a two-way communication, requiring a connection with God and the world.

The forensic aspect of witness. It has been mentioned that the words witness and testimony have a forensic meaning suggesting the imagery of the lawcourt. Martyrein contains heavy overtones of its primary meaning—to bear witness in the legal sense of the word.

Caird sees two lawcourts in the Apocalypse: the Roman court of law which judged the saints worthy of death, and the heavenly lawcourt

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[1]Hill, "Prophecy and Prophets," p. 412.

[2]Boice, Witness in Gospel of John, preface (n.p.).

which reverses the sentences of earthly lawcourts and vindicates the oppressed martyrs.[1] Though Christ's witnesses are indeed tried and condemned in human lawcourts and their sentences reversed in the heavenly lawcourt, there is an even greater issue involved. The saints are witnessing to a larger audience than a Roman lawcourt over a larger issue than their right to live. They, and even God Himself, are accused in the cosmic lawcourt of the universe. The prosecuting attorney is Satan, "the accuser of our brethren" who "accuses them day and night before our God" (12:10). The audience includes the heavens and all who dwell in them, plus earth and sea (v. 12). The "war in heaven" of 12:7, though described in terms of Satan's original ouster from heaven (Isa 14:12-15), is not a military battle but a legal one.[2]

What are the issues in this cosmic lawsuit? The issues over which Satan is defeated and God is vindicated are enumerated in Rev 12:10 as follows:

1. the salvation of God: i.e., His right to save sinners (cf. 7:9-10)

2. the power of God: i.e., whether or not He is in control (cf. 6:10)

3. the kingdom of God: i.e., His claim to sovereignty

4. the authority of Christ: i.e., His right to rule

Regarding the first issue, the nature of Satan's accusations becomes clear: he accuses "our brethren" of sin (12:10), thus contesting God's right to save them. The reference to Satan as accuser of the brethren is an allusion to Job 1:9-11 and Zech 3:1 where he accused Job

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[1] Revelation, p. 85; cf. Trites, NT Concept of Witness, p. 167.

[2] Trites, NT Concept of Witness, p. 171.

of serving God for selfish reasons, and Joshua, Israel's representative, of being filthy with sin. The saints overcome Satan's charge through (a) the blood of the Lamb which has washed away their sins (Rev 7:14) and (b) the word of their testimony, which is undoubtedly their confession of the saving power of Christ's blood. The fact that they loved not their lives even unto death (12:11) disproves the charge that they serve God for selfish reasons (Job 1:9–11). They have conquered the elemental, all-pervasive sin of egocentricity--self-love and self-service. Their lives provide corroborative evidence of God's power to save. Thus, the character of the saints becomes a secondary factor in the vindication of God (the cross being ever primary).

The blood of the Lamb also wins the legal victory for God and Christ on the issue of God's power and sovereignty and the authority of Christ which Satan had challenged by attempting to usurp the throne of God (Isa 14:13–14), setting up a rival throne (Rev 13:2; 16:10), and demanding the worship due only to God (13:4, 8).

The character of God is revealed in His method of dealing with the challenge: He wins His legal case through the demonstration of self-sacrificing love rather than through force. So persuasive is the cross that it convinces everyone that God and Christ are worthy to reign (5:13). It wins the unbounded loyalty and adoration of the onlooking universe (vv. 8–13), which in turn causes the expulsion of Satan (12:10; cf. Jn 12:31–32).

The significance of the saints' witness in the cosmic lawsuit. If the words witness and testimony indeed have forensic significance, then "the testimony of Jesus" as witnessed to by the saints must be designed to persuade the world and the universe of the rightness of

God's cause. The issues, as we have seen, involve the sovereignty of God and Christ (Rev 12:10)--Their right to save, to rule, to receive the total allegiance of the universe (ibid., 5:13). This right is contested by the opposition, which sets up a rival lordship and worship (13:7-8).

What the saints do is to take "the word of God and the testimony of Jesus"--the statement of the divine case (1:9; 6:9; 12:17; 20:4)--and transmit it to the world (14:6; 10:11; cf. Mt 24:14). Their testimony has these effects:

1. All nations, kindreds, tongues, and people hear the witness (Rev 14:6).

2. Their testimony decides the fate of their foes: when rejected it brings wrath and destruction upon their enemies (11:5-6).

3. Their testimony causes their own persecution and death (1:9; 6:9; 12:11; 20:4).

4. Their testimony concerning the blood of the Lamb wins the legal case: the accuser is defeated and cast down (12:11).

Teaching

The Revelator's pastoral letters are addressed to the angels of the seven churches (2:1, 8, 12, 18, etc.). These cannot be understood as heavenly angels since John could not send letters to them (as he was commanded to do in 1:11; 2:1, etc.). The word angel (aggelos) must be understood in its alternate meaning of messenger, a title which is applied to both priest (Mal 2:7) and prophet (Hag 1:13), thus shedding more light on the nature of the priestly role of the saints:

> For the lips of a priest should guard knowledge, and men should seek instruction from his mouth, for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts (Mal 2:7).

> Then Haggai, the messenger of the Lord, spoke to the people with the Lord's message, "I am with you, says the Lord" (Hag 1:13).

Malachi shows the teaching function of the priest, who, as the Lord's messenger, was to instruct the people (see also 2 Chron 15:3 which refers to "a teaching priest"). The prophet as messenger gives the Lord's message to the people.

The angels, or messengers, of the churches are also symbolized as stars held in the hand of Jesus (Rev 1:16, 20; 2:10). Daniel explains the nature of those who are stars:

> And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever (Dan 12:3).

"Those who are wise" can be translated "those who cause others to become wise" and hence takes on the meaning of "teachers."[1] "Those who turn many to righteousness" means "those who cause many to become righteous."[2]

A careful reading of the letters to the churches reveals that those angels or messengers of the seven churches could possibly represent the whole church corporately. Each church is addressed as "you" in the singular, yet the characteristics of the whole body of church members are described. This suggests that the whole church might be included in the figure of angel (messenger) or star. If so, then each church as a whole is held in the hand of Christ, and each church is to be the Lord's messenger, giving instruction to men from its mouth (Mal 2:7), transmitting the Lord's messages (Hag 1:13),

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[1]The Hebrew is the hiphil participle.

[2]Also a hiphil participle.

making many wise, and turning many to righteousness (Dan 12:3).[1] This teaching role is clearly a priestly ministry.[2]

The churches are also symbolized as lampstands (Rev 1:20), not themselves the light, but grand pedestals, each bearing an ancient vessel for oil, each vessel having a nozzle in which lay a wick burning with a clear, brilliant flame.[3] So the churches of the Lord are bearers of His light, the light of the Word kindled by the flame of the Spirit. Jesus calls His disciples the light of the world (Mt 5:14) though He is the primary light (Jn 8:12).

The figure of the lampstand emphasizes the local church in its capacity as a witnessing community, while the adjective "golden" depicts how precious is their faith and witness (cf. Rev 3:18; 18:16). The fact that Jesus Himself walks in the midst of the lampstands (2:1) means that He is present in those communities and that they as churches are corporate witnesses to their Lord.[4] Christians have the privilege of securing light from the Source of all light, and giving it in turn to those for whom they labor.

The symbols of angels, star, and lampstand, then, illustrate

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[1]It is possible that the three angels of Rev 14:6-11, giving the last warning messages to a judgment-bound world, also refer to the corporate church in its witnessing function. The phrase "flying in midheaven" (v. 6) does not negate this interpretation, since the church militant is figuratively seen in heaven in numerous places in the Apocalypse (12:1; 13:6; 14:1; 15:2; 18:20; 19:1). The figure of angels flying in midheaven declaring God's messages "with a loud voice" (v. 7) "to every nation and tribe and tongue and people" (v. 6) describes the power and universality of the church's proclamation.

[2]Brownlee, "Priestly Character," pp. 224-225.

[3]Lenski, Revelation, p. 63.

[4]Aune, "St. John's Portrait," p. 143.

that righteous character is expressed through a teaching ministry of enlightening the world with the gospel.

Prophecy

The word prophesy means to proclaim a divine revelation; a prophet is a proclaimer and interpreter of divine revelation.[1] John the Revelator is a prophet (22:9) and the message which he writes is a prophecy (1:3; 22:18-19). The Christian church could be considered a prophetic community[2] because the "two witnesses" which represent the church bearing its testimony to a hostile world are also called "two prophets" (11:10).[3] Also, John is called a fellow-servant with "your brethren who have the testimony of Jesus" (19:10), which later appears to be equated with "your brethren the prophets" (22:9). Thus it appears that all who hold the testimony of Jesus, that is, Christians in general, (12:17; 20:4) are prophets.[4] Other references to prophets, however, distinguish them from the saints in general (11:18; 18:20, 24). It is probably safest to conclude that the saints have a part in the prophetic ministry in that they are entrusted with delivering the prophetic message to the world. They are prophets, not in the primary sense of receiving divine revelations from God, but in the secondary sense of being proclaimers of the divine revelation.

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[1]Bauer, Greek-English Lexicon, s.v. "prophēteuō," "prophēteia."

[2]Hill, "Prophecy and Prophets," p. 413.

[3]The "two witnesses" undoubtedly apply both to the written Word (repeatedly called in corresponding dual fashion "the word of God and the testimony of Jesus" in the Apocalypse) and the spoken word as proclaimed by the living witnesses--the church. See Kenneth A. Strand, "The Two Witnesses of Rev 11:3-12," Andrews University Seminary Studies 19 (Summer 1981):131-134.

[4]Hill, "Prophecy and Prophets," p. 413.

Self-sacrifice

Offering sacrifice is a priestly function. Christ "freed us from our sins by his blood" (1:5) in typical priestly function. But for the priest to substitute His own life for the blood of animals is a new conception of the priesthood and sacrifice, and this is what Christ did.[1] Jesus offered His own life, Himself the priest, Himself the sacrifice.

In the Apocalypse, the saints follow the priestly ministry of Christ by laying down their lives in sacrifice: "they loved not their lives even unto death" (12:11). They were slain (sphazein--butchered, slaughtered) as He was slain. Christians exercised their priesthood in the measure that they offer themselves and confess their faith in bearing witness.[2]

John in his epistle suggests another way besides martyrdom of laying down one's life:

> By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren (1 Jn 3:16).

Here he means laying down one's life in loving service through ministering to the needs of the brethren (vv. 17-18).

Besides being a priestly function, suffering is an aspect of the kingly role of the saints. John connects the two in his astonishing affirmation, "I John, your brother and associate in tribulation, royalty, and patience" (Rev 1:9, French translation). Tribulation and royalty go together as with Christ the sacrifice of Calvary led to the

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[1] Feuillet, "Les Chrétiens Prêtres," pp. 46-47.

[2] Ibid., p. 50.

royalty of the resurrection morning.[1] More than this, Jesus was conscious of His kingship while He was suffering: "You say that I am a king. For this was I born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth" (Jn 18:37). It is part of the duty of kings to enter the front lines of battle, to suffer, perhaps even to die, in the struggle for victory. The saints of the Apocalypse fully share this royal role.

Service

In the Apocalypse the saints are called servants (douloi) who render service (diakonia, latreia) to God. Service (latreia) is ministry to God offered by people and priests and thus can be seen as a priestly function.[2] It will be shown that service is also a kingly function.

Who are servants? The servants of God are identified as the prophets (Rev 1:1; 10:7; 11:18), the 144,000 sealed (7:3), the martyrs (19:2), those who fear God (19:5), and the saints in general (1:1; 2:20; 11:18; 22:3, 6). Angels are called fellow-servants (syndouloi) (19:10; 22:9). All of God's loyal creation are His servants.

Meaning. The word for servant (doulos) means slave, bondman (from deō, bind), one in a permanent relation of servitude to another. Its opposite is lord, master, or owner (kyrios, despotēs), and it contrasts with free (eleutheros).[3] The slave in the ancient world had no rights of his own; his master could do with him absolutely as he liked.

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[1]Ibid., p. 51. [2]H. Strathman, "Latreuō," TDNT 4:60, 62.

[3]Trench, Synonyms of NT, p. 30.

In the eyes of the law he was property, a thing, a living tool, rather than a person. He had no time he could consider his own: every moment of his life belonged to his master.[1] As a slave, he was subject to an alien will, the will of his owner.[2]

In the despotic monarchies of the ancient Orient, doulos came to mean the subject of a king, one who submitted to the powerful claim of the monarch. From this usage the word was adopted into religious language, the relationship of dependence and service in which man stands to God. In the Septuagint the word means total commitment to the Godhead.[3] Here Hebrew and Hellenistic ideals come into sharp conflict, for to the Greeks personal dignity was found in being free. They repudiated the idea of slavery, in which one is subject to the will of a higher power, and struggled fiercely for independence.[4]

In contrast to the Greek ideal of autonomy, the Bible presents the God-man relationship in terms of Lord and slave. In this relationship man has no rights of his own--God must be the undisputed master of the life. One must submit his will to the will of God. All his energies and time belong to God. Service is not partial, but total.[5] In the Apocalypse, the slaves of God serve Him day and night (7:15); they serve Him to the death (6:11; 19:2). However, their service is voluntary (3:20), based upon love and trust (2:19) and the fear of God (19:5). Their service is expressed in witness (1:1-3), patient endurance (2:19) and praise to God (19:5).

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[1]Barclay, The Gospel of Matthew, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960) 1:251.

[2]Karl H. Rengstorf, "Doulos," TDNT 2:261. [3]Ibid., p. 267.

[4]Ibid., pp. 261-262. [5]Barclay, Matthew, 1:251-252.

The Revelator, like Paul, depicts two slaveries, every man belonging to one or the other. Thus the choice is not between freedom and slavery but between slavery to sin and slavery to righteousness (Rom 6:16). Babylon has her slaves--the bodies (sōmata) and souls (psychai) of men--whom she buys from the merchants of earth (Rev 18:13). God's people have been freed from slavery (1:5; here an allusion to Egyptian bondage which became a symbol of sin) in order to give allegiance to Him (v. 6). Thus the contrast is between slavery to Babylon and sin, and slavery to God and His kingdom.

Though the words master and slave are opposites, Jesus unites them in Himself. While He is Lord of lords (19:16), He is at the same time the "suffering Servant" Lamb that was slain (5:6; cf. Isa 53:7, 11). In his gospel, John shows Jesus to be the Lord who does the work of a slave (Jn 13:13-14; cf. Php 2:7). During His ministry, Jesus taught that to rule is to serve:

> ". . . whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave; even as the Son of man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mt 20:25-28).

The saints of the Apocalypse, like their Master, demonstrate the royalty of service. They are slaves and kings: they serve and reign (Rev 22:3-4), which is to say, they reign by serving.

Righteous character, whether in the saints, angels, or the Son of man Himself, is revealed in self-sacrificing service to others, in devotion to the will of God rather than of self, and in the expenditure of one's total life for the glory of the Master, as indicated by the word slave.

Worship

Worship is the sublimest expression of righteous character. It may be considered a priestly function, shedding further light on the meaning of the priest-king office of believers. Worship is not only an expression of righteous character, but a means of developing righteous character.

Worship is a universal experience for all intelligent beings both in the loyal and hostile camps of creation. Man will surely exalt, admire, and honor something. If God is not the object of worship, then self (18:7), or demons or idols (9:20), or false religion (13:8), or material things (18:11-14) will take His place in the affections. The loyal universe finds meaning for existence in the worship of God.

Who worship? Though many groups of worshipers are mentioned in the Apocalypse, all are found in chapter 5 where the four living creatures lead out in worship, joined by the twenty-four elders (4:8-11; 5:8), the chorus swelling as myriads of angels join in ascribing praise to the Lamb (5:11), finally echoing to the farthest reaches of the universe as all created beings in heaven and on earth swell the anthem (v. 13). The saints who are redeemed from earth praise God, both the 144,000 (14:1-3; 15:2-3) and the great multitude (7:9-10). Evil men and angels will also worship God (15:4), for the creatures "under the earth and in the sea" are demonic (9:1-2; 13:1).

Mode of worship. The expressions of worship include singing (4:8; 5:9; 14:3; 15:3), sometimes with musical instruments (5:8; 14:2; 15:2), and crying out with a loud voice (5:12; 19:1-6). The worshipers

frequently fall down before God on their faces (1:17; 4:10; 5:8, 14; 7:11; 11:16; 19:4), and cast their crowns before the throne (4:10). At the ingathering of earth's harvest, the antitypical feast of tabernacles, they wave palm branches (7:9; cf. Lev 23:40). Sometimes the cries and singing are antiphonal (Rev 4:8–11; 16:5–7; 19:1–8). The worship is filled with rejoicing (12:12; 18:20; 19:7).

Worship is a continual activity: the four living creatures "day and night never cease to sing" (4:8); the 144,000 are "before the throne of God, and serve him day and night within his temple" (7:15); "he who conquers" will be "a pillar in the temple of my God; never shall he go out of it" (3:12). "Heavenly well-being is conceived as a continual liturgy. It will pass itself in a worship service without end."[1] There can be no true life without praise. Praise of God is a way of life.[2]

Reasons for worship. The occasions and reasons for worshiping God are clearly set forth in the eight doxologies of the Apocalypse.[3] These doxologies assign progressive reasons for adoring God, which unfold as the divine plan for this world unfolds.

The first doxology, though brief, contains profound truths:

> "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty,
> who was and is and is to come!" (4:8).

Here God is introduced as the First Cause of the universe, rather than

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[1] Feuillet, "Les Chrétiens Prêtres," p. 59.

[2] Claus Westerman, The Praise of God in the Psalms (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1961), p. 159.

[3] For further treatment of the doxologies in the Apocalypse see Ralph E. Neall's research paper, "The Vindication of God in Daniel and Revelation" (May 1976), pp. 28–43, in the Heritage Room, James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Mich.

impersonal matter, blind chance, or brute force. The God who founded the natural and moral order is holy, not hostile or evil: the universe, and this world in particular, is subject to a moral order based on the holiness of God. God is almighty: He is Lord. He has ultimate power and control and has not been usurped by a stronger power. Furthermore, He is constant and dependable--not capricious--throughout the eternities of past and future and the point called now. The eternal existence of the holy God is the first reason for worship.

The second doxology praises God for creation:

> "Worthy art thou, our Lord and God,
> to receive glory and honor and power,
> for thou didst create all things,
> and by thy will they existed and were created" (v. 11).

Creation places the intelligent universe under obligation to thank the Creator (v. 9), to whom every creature owes existence. Each is not only totally obligated to God, but totally dependent upon God for each successive breath and heartbeat. The worship of God as Creator prevents mankind from seeking the dignity of man in himself.[1] The purpose for man's creation was to image the Creator (Gen 1:27). It is through the worship of the Creator that the divine character is mirrored in the creature: by beholding the glory of the Lord, he is changed from one degree of glory to another (2 Cor 3:18; Rev 22:4).

The third doxology progresses to the theme of salvation:

> "Worthy are thou to take the scroll and to open its seals,
> for thou wast slain and by thy blood didst ransom men for God
> from every tribe and tongue and people and nation,
> and hast made them a kingdom and priests to our God
> and they shall reign on earth" (5:9-10).

This doxology places man under double obligation to worship: he

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[1] LaRondelle, Perfection, p. 74.

belongs to God not only by creation but by redemption. He is not his own; he has been bought with a price (1 Cor 6:20). The figure of ransom introduces the idea of loss (kidnaping) and retrieval, of sin and salvation. The Lord of lords (Rev 19:16) appears as a Lamb that was slain to ransom a lost world by His blood. The infinite sacrifice calls forth the adoration not only of the ones redeemed (5:13) but of the whole unfallen universe (v. 11) who see that their Lord is a loving, self-sacrificing Lord. The sacrifice effects not only recovery of what was lost, but the exaltation of man to the level of kings and priests (v. 10).

The fourth doxology recognizes salvation as a gift of Father and Son (7:10)--God making the infinite sacrifice of His Son, and the Son making the infinite sacrifice of His life.

The following three doxologies (11:17-18; 15:3-4; 19:1-3) praise God for His judgments. During the period represented by the third and fourth doxologies, God appears to be weak in His handling of sin. He has permitted the powers of evil to conquer the saints (13:7). In the fifth doxology Almighty God, who has appeared to be weak because of the triumph of His enemies, takes His power and begins to reign (11:17) by judging and rewarding good and evil according to their deserts (v. 18). His acts of judgment are regarded as great and wonderful, just and true, by the persecuted saints (15:3-4), because it is by judgment on their enemies that the saints are delivered (vv. 2-3, an allusion to Israel's deliverance from the Egyptians). God's judgments are fair in that the punishment fits the crime (16:5-7). The harlot is judged for her fornication and her persecution of the saints (19:2).

Judgment on the wicked is the revelation of God's salvation, glory, and power (vv. 1-2).

The final doxology in climactic shouts praises God that He now supremely reigns:

> "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns.
> Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory,
> for the marriage of the Lamb has come,
> and his Bride has made herself ready;
> it was granted her to be clothed with fine linen, bright and pure"
> —for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints (19:6-8).

The evidence that He now supremely reigns is that His sovereignty is no longer contested: the harlot has been destroyed (v. 2) and the Bride is now completely one with Him. There is now complete harmony in the universe: not only has the rebellion of the hostile world been destroyed, but all sin in the character of the saints has been washed away. With the glorification of the church, all the hostility of the sinful nature is destroyed. Here the Bride has a righteous character, both imputed and imparted: the fine linen, bright and pure, that is given to her (edothē autē) not only covers, but purifies, so that her deeds are also righteous (v. 8). The divine Husband is now sovereign over His Bride. For the first time since the Fall, God is completely sovereign over His people.

The significance of worship. The praise of God in the Apocalypse reveals the dominant trait of righteous character--theocentrism, the exaltation of God rather than self. Righteous character is marked by an exalted view of God and a humble view of self. Christ is seen as worthy (5:9, 12) and self as unworthy. The apostle John reacted as did other prophets who felt undone, unclean, weak, and sinful in the presence of God (Isa 6:5; Dan 10:8-9; Lk 5:8): he fell at

His feet as though dead (Rev 1:17). Even unfallen beings, who have no sinful nature to shame them in God's presence, fall at His feet in humble adoration (5:8; 7:11).

In their worship, the loyal creation ascribe all glory to God:

"To [God] be glory and dominion for ever and ever" (1:6).

"Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!" (5:12).

"To him who sits upon the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might for ever and ever!" (v. 13).

From these ascriptions of praise to God, several conclusions can be drawn:

1. The worshiper acknowledges God as the possessor and source of glory and power (1:6; 5:13; 19:1).

2. God not only <u>has</u> glory, but He <u>receives</u> it (4:11; 5:12) through the worship of His creatures. This means that the worshipers give their power, wealth, wisdom, and might to God (4:9; 11:13; 14:7).

3. The worshipers could not give power and glory to God unless they had received it from Him. Human power is not intrinsic but derived from one of two sources, Satan (13:2) or God. Man received glory and honor (Ps 8:5-6) by being created in the image of God (Gen 1:27). The "kingdom, power, and glory" that belong intrinsically to God (Mt 6:13) have been conferred upon men (Dan 2:37).

The worshipers of the Apocalypse demonstrate that the power, wealth, wisdom, honor, and glory that they have received from God are to be returned to God. They cast their crowns, emblems of their victory, power, and dominion, at His feet (4:10). Kings and nations bring their glory and honor to Him (21:24, 26).

How can the creature give anything to God, who already has

everything? In what way can he return glory to God? (1) By acknowledging God as the source of glory, and thus not taking it as belonging to himself. "To Him be glory!" means that one does not glorify himself. (2) By using all one's "glory"--talent, power, wealth, wisdom--to exalt God. The worshiper ascribes supreme worth to God ("He is worthy!"), seeking God's glory rather than his own. He sees his life as having value to God; he sees that he can bring glory to God by the total dedication of his energies, powers, and abilities to God. His light shines to glorify God (Mt 5:16). (3) By giving God dominion in his life. "To Him be glory and dominion" means to return to God the dominion usurped by Satan and self: it is to make Him Lord and Master of the life.

This is the worship that sinful man refuses to accord to God. Evil character is marked by the desire to gain and retain power, wealth, wisdom, might, honor, and glory for oneself apart from God. For these man struggles and fights and dies. Exalting is such a part of human existence that when man ceases to exalt God, he exalts himself instead[1] (Rev 18:7) and worships the works of his own hands (9:20). He values the wealth and power God gives more than the God who gave them. The great lament of the world over the destruction of Babylon (18:9-19) is the cry of all who have false values, who love the gift apart from the Giver, and thus lose both.

As true worshipers place supreme value in God, giving all their powers to honor Him, and not loving their lives even unto death (12:11), they are only responding to the example of Christ, who placed infinite value upon mankind, as revealed by the ransom price of His

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[1] Westerman, Praise of God, p. 160.

blood (5:9). He laid down power, wealth, wisdom, honor, and glory in the humiliation of the incarnation--the unconsciousness of the womb and the tomb--to lift up the fallen race. As the glory of sinful man is the exaltation of self, Jesus' glory was the renunciation of self. Jesus regarded the hour of death as the hour of glory (Jn 12:23; 17:1). His glory was the abandonment of glory! The vast creation concurs: it is because the Lamb was slain that they inundate Him with praise (Rev 5:12). Because He placed infinite value upon mankind, the redeemed place supreme value upon Him. When they see God's valuing of themselves, in both creation and redemption, they respond by the total dedication of all their powers to Him. This is the meaning of worship. This is the supreme expression of righteous character.

The effects of worship on the worshiper. By exalting God, the worshiper is exalted. By constantly beholding the face of God, his character takes on a likeness of God (22:4). A continual cycle of glorification develops in which God bestows glory on the creature and the creature returns glory to God. Note the exaltation of the saints: they share His rule, dominion, and power (2:26-27; 5:10; 22:5). Those who cast their crowns before the throne of God (4:10) are lifted up to sit with Him on it (3:21).

Prayer

The prayers of the saints are mentioned twice in the Apocalypse (5:8; 8:3), and the content of the prayers once. The prayer of the martyrs is so powerful that some commentators see prayer as a kingly

function, a method by which saints now rule on earth.[1] Prayer can also be seen as a priestly function.

The souls of the martyrs under the altar cry out with a loud voice:

> "O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before thou wilt judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell upon the earth?" (6:10).

This prayer is efficacious in bringing judgments upon the persecutors of the saints. The cry from under the altar is eventually answered by the cry of the altar itself: "Men have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink. It is their due!" (16:4-7).

The connection of the prayers of the saints with judgments is also seen in 8:3-5, where the angel who receives their prayers at the altar takes fire from the altar and throws it upon the earth, resulting in the trumpet judgments. The altar that receives their prayers becomes the source from which judgments are poured out upon the wicked in answer to those prayers (cf. 9:13-15; 14:18-19, as in 8:3-5 and 16:4-7 above). The prayers of the saints are so powerful that they may be seen as justification for the judgments of the sixth seal, the trumpets, the plagues, and the wine press of the wrath of God.

Prayers for vengeance appear to contradict Jesus' admonition: "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Mt 5:44) though Jesus upheld the prayer for vengeance in His parable of the unjust judge: "And will not God vindicate (AV, avenge) his elect, who cry to him day and night? . . . I tell you, he will vindicate them speedily" (Lk 18:6-7). Imprecation is not a moral problem as long as

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[1] Feuillet, "Les Chrétiens Prêtres," p. 58; Rissi, "Kerygma of Revelation," p. 14.

it rests entirely upon God's omniscience and righteousness and not upon human impulse.[1] Paul admonished, "Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God; for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord'" (Rom 12:19). Furthermore, it must be recognized that the martyrs of Rev 6:10 do not consciously ask for vengeance, since they are dead (see p. 59). It is the fact of injustice that demands vindication—their blood, as the blood of Abel, crying out for justice (cf. Gen 4:10). Hence, the morality of imprecation is not a problem in the Apocalypse.

Summary: Righteous Character in the Apocalypse

Righteous character in the Apocalypse is described primarily in terms of relationship to God. The qualities emphasized are loyalty through suffering (shown by patient endurance), love, fear, faith, holiness, and righteousness, expressed in service, obedience, prayer, and worship—all directed to God. This vertical relationship with God invests the worshipers with authority as priest-kings to the world, which means that they have a prophetic mission to witness, teach, and proclaim the "everlasting gospel" (also called "the word of God and the testimony of Jesus") to all nations. Thus righteousness in its vertical dimension is the worship of God and in its horizontal dimension is witness to the world.

The Development of Righteous Character

Righteous character is portrayed in the Apocalypse as a life totally oriented to God in worship, service, love, and faithfulness to the point of dying. The question arises, How can such character be

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[1] Thomas, "Imprecatory Prayers," p. 130.

produced? What does the Apocalypse have to say about the development of righteous character? Motivation is a key to behavior and will be discussed first, followed by a consideration of the means of character development.

Motivation in Character Development

Motivation to right living in the Apocalypse centers in a Person rather than an ideal or principle. Incentives derive from the joys of a positive relationship to God and the horrors of a negative relationship to Him. Compliance to law is not motivated by desire for harmony with the social order but rather from loyalty to the Person of God and Christ (Rev 12:17; 14:12). The frequent promises of reward or punishment could conceivably appeal to self-interest--the desire to gain life and avoid death--but this motivation is modified by demands for total loyalty to God to the point of extreme self-sacrifice.

Incentives to righteousness

The incentives to righteous living are presented as promises to those who "conquer" (e.g., 2:7, 11; 21:7). These promises reach ultimate fulfillment in the future life, but have a present spiritual realization.

The greatest reward God offers mankind is the covenant relationship with Himself: "I will be his God and he shall be my son" (21:7; cf. Ezek 37:27; Lev 26:12). This goes beyond man's original face-to-face relationship to God: God Himself will come to live on earth with His human family, establishing His dwelling with men (Rev 21:3). Humanity will once again enter the immediate presence of God no longer needing shelter from His presence; rather, He will

shelter them with His presence (7:15). The close relationship of God (or Christ) to His people is described in terms of Shepherd and sheep (7:17), Groom and bride (19:7-8).

But this close relationship with God, which finds ultimate fulfillment in the future, also enters the present. Anyone who opens the door to Christ may enjoy close fellowship with Him now (3:20), feeding on the "hidden manna" (2:17) which is Himself (Jn 6:32-35). Today the Shepherd leads His sheep to the still waters (Ps 23:2; cf. Rev 7:17); today the divine Husband stands with His bride on Mount Zion (14:1).

To experience this close personal relationship with God is the greatest incentive to righteousness offered in the Apocalypse.

Along with the gift of Himself comes the gift of life, since God is the "living one" (1:18; 7:2), the Source of all life (11:11) which flows from Him like a river (22:1); He is also the Conqueror of death (1:5, 18; 2:8). Life in the Johannine literature means a new quality of existence: the presence of the divine with the human (1 Jn 5:12). In Revelation, life is represented symbolically as the tree of life (2:7; 22:2, 14, 19), the crown of life (2:10), the water of life (7:17; 21:6; 22:2-3, 17). The right to life is symbolized by one's name in the book of life (3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12, 15; 21:27). Eternal life is a future gift to those who conquer: they will receive a crown of life (2:10) and have access to the tree of life (2:7; 22:14); they will not be hurt by the second death (2:11; 20:6)--for them death will be no more (21:4); the Lamb will lead them to springs of living water (7:17) that flows from the throne of God (22:1-2).

Yet life is also a present gift enjoyed by the saints even

while they suffer persecution and death. They may now drink of the fountain of the water of life freely (21:6; 22:17). Their Shepherd even now leads them to still waters (Ps 23:2; Rev 7:17), and the tree of life with fruit for food and leaves for healing is now spiritually available (Ezek 47:12; Rev 22:2). Their names have been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world (13:8; 17:8).

Concomitant with the life God offers is the role of priest-king to give challenge and meaning to life. Those who conquer will reign with Christ (20:6; 22:5), sitting with Him on His throne (3:21), judging (20:4) and ruling (2:26-27). As priests they will engage in a never-ceasing worship of God (7:15). The king-priest role begins in this life, however: by His death Christ has made them a kingdom, priests to His God (1:5); they reign now (5:10, variant reading) as participants of the kingdom (1:9) through their suffering and witness.

With the gift of life comes future perfection of character represented by "fine linen, bright and pure" (19:8) along with the eradication of the curse of sin (21:27; 22:3). But even in this life a perfect standing with God is available through the merits of Christ. Though His people still must fight to conquer sin, as indicated in the messages to the churches, His blood has loosed them from the dominion of sin (1:5); His blood washes away the guilt of sin (7:14; 22:14), and they are clothed in the white robes of Christ's righteousness (3:18; 16:15; 22:14).

The promise that has stirred the imagination of the church through the ages is the prospect of a new earth with its new Jerusalem, adorned with streets of gold, gates of pearl, and foundations of jewels (21:9-21). Yet the city-temple is a present reality today, the saints

themselves being built as living stones into its structure (Eph 2:20-22),[1] which constitutes the dwelling place of God (Rev 13:6), though it is now blasphemed (ibid.) and trampled by the heathen (11:2).

Victory is an eschatological gift, comprehending the defeat of the dragon and his followers (19:19-21) and the enthronement of Christ's followers (20:4-6). Yet the promise of victory is also for the present: victory was won at the cross (5:5) when Satan was cast out (12:9-10), so that the saints can conquer him through the blood of the Lamb (v. 11). The exhortations to conquer (2:7, 11, 17, etc.) reflect this present reality.

The incentives for developing a righteous character are thus based upon both future and present rewards: a relationship with God and Christ that promises life, kingship, righteousness, and victory.

Deterrents to sin

Deterrents to the sinful life appear in the Revelation as threatenings and warnings of dire consequences to all who refuse to repent. These threatenings have an eschatological fulfillment, but also "cast their shadows before" into the present.

The most tragic punishment threatened upon the unrepentant is severance from the life of God--eternal separation from Him. In the great day of judgment, many will be "outside" the city (22:15) because nothing unclean may enter it (21:27). They lose their share in the tree of life (22:19). Severance from Christ occurs not only in the eschaton, but in historical time. The dragon and his angels were

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[1] John's figure of the city built upon the twelve foundations of the twelve apostles is reminiscent of Paul's figure of the temple built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets.

thrown out of heaven (12:8-9). Those who do not repent of their sins are excommunicated from the church (2:5; 3:16).

Those who war against Christ will react in terror at the parousia (1:7; 6:15-17) as He comes to war against them with the sword of His mouth (19:15, 21). Because they refuse to do Him homage, but worship rival gods, they must drain the cup of the fury of his wrath (16:19; 14:9-10); they will be thrown into the winepress of His wrath to be trodden under His feet until blood gushes out to the horses' bridles (14:19-20; 19:15). They will suffer torment in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone (14:10; 19:20; 20:10, 13; 21:8) until they are consumed (20:9). This is the second death (20:14; 21:8).

But God does not leave all of His wrath to the future. He exposes sinners to His wrath in the present in order to deter them from meriting the ultimate, eschatological wrath. He wars with the sword of His mouth (2:16) against unfaithful followers. He permits adversity—sword, famine, and pestilence (6:8)—to strike, to arouse humanity to its danger. He sends plagues of hail, fire, blood, darkness, and death (chapters 8 and 9) as foreshadowings of greater wrath to come (chapter 16). He hedges up the way of the wicked to seek to divert them from their course.

It is evident that the motivations appealed to in the Apocalypse consist of rewards and punishments, usually regarded as the most immature level of motivation:[1] one might comply with God's requirements simply for the sake of expediency. However, there are several factors which rule out expediency as a motivation for conforming to the will of God:

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[1]Kohlberg, "The Child," p. 133.

1. Whoever would be a saint, according to the Apocalypse, must pay the price of persecution and possible martyrdom (12:11). From a secular viewpoint, it is disadvantageous to be righteous.

2. Many of the rewards and punishments in the Apocalypse are future in nature. They have to do with man's eternal destiny. The expedient man is concerned mostly with the present.

3. The rewards and punishments which apply to the present are spiritual in nature. A high degree of motivation is required to seek spiritual values over temporal.

It thus appears that temporal advantage--the avoidance of punishment and the obtainment of reward--is not the major motivation of the Apocalypse. Rather, it is loyalty to God--a loyalty that will result in both pain and pleasure, sorrow and joy.

The Means for Character Development

What means does God use in character development? In the Apocalypse the development of righteous character begins with a vision of Christ and a corresponding understanding of self. The way of righteousness is most clearly delineated in the messages to the seven churches; but before these messages are given, the prophet is shown a vision of Christ and of himself. Each message thereafter begins with a vision of Christ followed by the church's corresponding need.

John saw Christ in majesty: his response was to fall at His feet as though dead (Rev 1:17). His feelings paralleled those of other biblical saints when confronted with God: of woe, uncleanness, and undoneness (Isa 6:5); of self-abhorrence (Job 42:6); of sinfulness and fear (Lk 5:8). The human response to the consuming holiness of God is

an overwhelming sense of self-abhorrence.[1] Until one has seen God, he has not seen himself with his deformities, sinfulness, and nothingness.

Jesus' response is deeply significant:

> But he laid his right hand upon me, saying, "Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one; I died, and behold I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades. Now write what you see, what is, and what is to take place hereafter." (Rev 1:17-19).

This response indicates that man derives his adequacy, character, and mission from Christ. Christ as "first and last" is allness to make up for man's nothingness; as "the living one," He is the dynamic power for righteousness; as the Conqueror of Death and Hades, He overcomes the consequences of man's sin; as one who commissions by the laying on of hands, He gives mission and purpose to man. Man becomes righteous only as he contemplates God and prostrates himself in total dependence upon Him.

The exhortations

The exhortations to the seven churches, often with further comment in the rest of the book, reveal how righteous character is developed. In considering these, this study will take special note of the divine and human components--whether character development is seen as God's work, man's work, or a combination of the two.

The very existence of commands and exhortations presupposes two factors: the divine initiative in the work of character development, and the human responsibility to make choices. Man either needs the command ("Repent!" "Do the first works," etc.) or he faces the divine alternative ("If not, I will . . . !"). The Bible begins and ends with

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[1] Eichrodt, Theology of OT, 2:280.

a choice regarding the tree of life (Gen 2:9, 16-17; Rev 22:14). Without choice-making there is no character development.

"Repent"

A frequent exhortation in the messages to the churches is the command to repent (2:5, 16, 21-22; 3:3, 19). Repentance, metanoia, means (1) "knowing after," or afterknowledge; (2) a change of mind resulting from this afterknowledge; (3) regret for the course pursued; and (4) a change of conduct for the future based upon the previous points. It means "that mighty change in mind, heart, and life wrought by the Spirit of God."[1]

In the Apocalypse, both church (specifically five of the seven churches) and world (9:20; 16:9, 11) need to repent. The sin that needs to be repented of is a faulty relationship to Christ: in the church a waning loyalty (loss of first love [2:4], unfaithfulness [v. 14], spiritual deadness [3:1], lukewarmness [vv. 15-16], and self-sufficiency [v. 17]); in the world hostility (16:9, 11, 21) and allegiance to rival gods or objects of worship (9:20; 16:2). Repentance demands an about-face in the life: recovering the first love (2:5), eliminating subversive elements and doctrines in the church (vv. 20-23), awaking from death (3:2), and admitting Christ and His riches into the life (vv. 18, 20). The response must be active and enthusiastic: "Awake and strengthen what remains" (3:2); "Be zealous and repent" (v. 19). Repentance thus requires decision and active response on the part of man.

God takes the initiative in bringing about repentance by

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[1]Trench, Synonyms of NT, pp. 258, 260.

exhortations (above) and threatenings (2:5, 16, 23; 3:3) to the churches, and by plagues upon the wicked world (9:20; 16:9). It is the voice of Christ through His Spirit (2:7, 11, 17, etc.) that prods man to repentance, while man's role is to heed the Spirit's voice (ibid.). Repentance is thus man's response to God's prodding.

The urgency of the command to repent is tied to the imminence of Christ's coming, both the eschatological coming in glory and the spiritual coming to the individual (2:5, 16, 25; 3:3, 11).[1] In view of humanity's natural hostility to God, and the constant tendency of even the converted person to fall away from God, constant repentance is necessary to reorient the life to God for the work of character development.

"Read," "hear," "remember," "keep," "hold fast"

The written Word is a vital instrument in character development. The book of Revelation inculcates great reverence for the Word, which is God's revelation, transmitted to man through Christ (Rev 1:1-2). In writing the Apocalypse, John is conscious that he is writing by divine order and direction (1:10-11, 19; 2:1, 8, 12, etc.; 10:4; 19:9; 21:5; 22:6, 16). Jesus Himself, as the supreme Revelation of God, is called the Word (Rev 19:13; cf. Jn 1:1-2, 14, 18), and hence must be heeded (Rev 2:1, 7).

The book contains numerous blessings and exhortations regarding the role of the Word in the Christian life.

The first step is to receive the Word through reading and hearing, no doubt in a gathering of believers where one reads and the rest

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[1] Note the same double use of "I will come" in Jn 14:3, 18, 23.

listen (1:3). The listeners are to be attentive: eight times the instruction is repeated, "He who has an ear, let him hear" (in the messages to the churches, and 13:9), an oft-repeated saying of Jesus (Mt 11:15; 13:9, 43). Having an ear to hear implies attentiveness, plus the willingness to receive instruction and rebuke.

Second, the Word must be treasured in the heart. The churches are to remember what they have received and hear, and keep it (Rev 1:3; 3:3). In an age when few written copies of the Word were available, the only way to keep Scripture would be to commit it to memory.

Third, the Word must be guarded. The original meaning of the word keep (tēreō) was to keep watch over, guard, or protect.[1] There is a great concern to guard the deposit of truth found in the book of Revelation. "Keep what is written in the prophecy" (1:3); "hold fast what you have" (2:25; 3:11); "remember what you have received and heard; keep that" (3:3), the church is admonished. The saints must "hold fast" to the things of Jesus: His name (2:13), His faith (ibid.; 14:12), and His works (2:26)—all revealed in Scripture. To guard the Word also means to protect it against falsification (22:18-19). The believers were to test all doctrines (2:2) and hold only to the words of God, which were trustworthy and true (22:6).[2] The eternal destiny of men depends on whether they accept the Word, or corrupt and reject it (22:18-19).[3]

Fourth, the Word must be obeyed—another meaning of keep is to obey. To "keep the words of the prophecy" is to obey them. The

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[1]Bauer, Greek-English Lexicon, s.v. "tēreō."

[2]Harold Riesenfeld, "Tēreō," TDNT 8:145.

[3]Hill, "Prophecy and Prophets," p. 410.

believers are to "keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus" (14:12; cf. 12:17).[1] An expression placed alongside the "commandments of God" is the "faith of Jesus" (Rev 14:12). This seems to be the equivalent of the "Word" as a body of truth which has been entrusted to the believers, the basic doctrines or beliefs which the church holds in a nonbelieving environment (cf. 1 Tim 3:9; 2 Tim 4:7; Acts 6:7).[2]

Fifth, the Word must be assimilated. Besides enjoining the keeping of the Word, the Apocalypse employs the figure of eating it. John was told to eat the little scroll in the hand of the angel (10:9); its message was sweet to him, but the proclamation of it (v. 11) was bitter because of the opposition it caused (chapter 11). Similarly, the church was to be nourished for 1260 days in the wilderness (12:6), an allusion to the manna fed to Israel in the desert (Ex 16:4ff.) which typifies feeding upon Christ (Jn 6:32-35) through His Word.

Finally, the Word must be shared. The believers were to transmit the Word to others (1:9; 6:9; 12:11, etc.) in order that the gospel might be proclaimed to all the world (14:6).

Those who keep God's Word will in turn be kept by God through the hour of temptation (3:10); if they hold fast to it, they are assured of the crown of victory (v. 11). Thus, the Word--read, heard, kept, guarded, protected, obeyed, eaten, and proclaimed--produces righteous character.

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[1] In the Johannine writings, the word commandments is sometimes used interchangeably with word (Jn 14:21, 23; 1 Jn 2:4-5), perhaps because the Hebrew word for word (dāvār), which was in the back of the author's mind, can be translated as either word or commandment (W. J. Harrelson, "Commandment," IDB, 1:662-663).

[2] E. C. Blackman, "Faith, Faithfulness," IDB 2:234.

"Do the works"

The book of Revelation is heavily works-oriented, with works playing a significant part in the description of righteous character. It follows that works have a part in the process of character development.

The church of Ephesus was commended for its works of toil, patient endurance, doctrinal fidelity, opposition to error, and intolerance of evil (2:2, 6). Yet these works were defective (v. 5) because they were not motivated by love (v. 4). Zeal without love had made religion a heavy drudgery of hard labor and unwearied striving (v. 3). Such service was not acceptable to Christ, who required the first works (v. 4) which were equated with the first love (ibid.). The Apocalypse calls love a work (2:19); it must be the motive of all other works, or they are not acceptable to God.

The church of Thyatira had the opposite problem: love without doctrinal integrity. Their works of love, faith, service, and patient endurance (v. 19) were marred by a toleration of false doctrine called "the deep things of Satan" (vv. 20, 24) which led to infidelity to Christ (v. 20). The severity of Christ's threat to the apostates in this church (vv. 22-23) demonstrates the danger of false doctrine, while His leniency (v. 24) to the loving saints who knew little doctrine (v. 25) demonstrates the importance of love.

Other works of which Christ approves are fidelity through suffering (2:9) and faithfulness unto death (vv. 10, 13). Works which He strongly condemns are spiritual apathy (3:1, 15) and self-sufficiency (v. 17).

The method of doing good works may be suggested in 2:26: "He

. . . who keeps my works until the end . . . ." To keep Christ's works undoubtedly means to do His works. The saints are to do Christ's works as Christ did the works of His Father (Jn 5:36; 14:10-11). It was through union with the Father that Jesus did the Father's works:

> "Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father in me? . . . The Father who dwells in me does his works" (v. 10).

Only through union with Christ can the saints "keep" His works.

The works of the saints are cherished by God, being remembered after their death (14:13). They constitute the "fine linen, bright and pure" in which the Lamb's Bride is arrayed (19:8). Works form the basis of judgment, determining rewards and punishments (2:23; 20:12-13; 22:12). However, the nature of good works is not spelled out in detail, as in the gospels and epistles. There is no mention of benevolence to the poor and needy (as in Mt 25:34-36; Jas 1:27), hospitality to the saints (Rom 12:13), or doing good to one's enemies (vv. 19-21; Mt 5:44). The "work" most emphasized in the Apocalypse is fidelity to Christ through persecution and death (2:10, 13, 19; 3:8; 14:13), an emphasis to be expected in a "tract for hard times."

"Buy . . . gold, . . . white garments, . . . eyesalve"

Laodicea, the rich-poor church (3:17) (in contrast to Smyrna, the poor-rich church [2:9]), enjoyed so much material prosperity that it did not realize its spiritual poverty. Jesus unmasked its true condition, and then commanded: "Buy from me . . . ." (v. 18). This command implies three things:

1. The Laodicean, being estranged from Christ (v. 20), is destitute of righteous character and hence must "buy" it. Apart from

Him even the professed Christian is "wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked" (v. 17).

2. Jesus is the source of the "riches" of righteousness.

3. There is a price to be paid for the riches He offers. They are to be bought, though "without money and without price" (Isa 55:1). They cost all that a man has (Mt 13:44–46)--the total commitment of loving Christ more than life itself (Rev 12:11). Buying thus implies God's role of supplying righteousness and man's role of wholeheartedly seeking it.

Gold. A clue to the meaning of gold is found by looking at Smyrna, the poor-rich church ("I know your tribulation and your poverty [but you are rich]," 2:9). Smyrna possessed the character riches that Christ most desired, fidelity to the point of death (2:10). "Refined by fire" refers to the tribulation (as in Smyrna, vv. 9–10) that purifies character. Peter employs "gold tested by fire" as a symbol of faith and love (1 Pet 1:7–8). According to His messages to the churches, fidelity and love are the character traits Jesus values most.

White garments. The white garments as well as the gold symbolize righteous character (Isa 61:10), the end product of salvation. Righteous character in the saints has both its divine and human components, as shown in the following passage:

> Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, — God's part
> for the marriage of the Lamb has come,
> and his Bride has made herself ready; — man's part
> it was granted her to be clothed with fine linen . . . — God's part
> for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints — man's part
> (Rev 19:7–8).

Man's role, as revealed in the Apocalypse, is to do the following:

1. He must obtain the white robe. Jesus said, "Buy of me . . . white garments" (3:18). Jesus is the only source of righteous character. Laodicea had an abundance of self-righteousness (v. 17), but Christ dismissed it as "the shame of your nakedness" (v. 18). Since the fall, man's condition outside of Christ has been nakedness (Gen 3:7). In the estimation of God, humanistic morality is no better than fig leaves (ibid.) or filthy rags (Isa 64:6, AV) Therefore man must buy righteousness from Christ at the cost of total commitment (above).

2. He must retain the white robe. It can be lost: clothing is easily changed. "Blessed is he who is awake, keeping his garments that he may not go naked and be seen exposed" (Rev 16:15). Once having trusted Christ for righteousness, one may relapse into self-righteousness and become unclothed. One must abide in Christ to be clothed with His righteousness.

3. He must maintain the purity of the robe through frequent laundering. "Blessed are those who keep on washing (hoi plynontes--present continuous) their robes" (22:14). "These are they who have . . . washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (7:14). Here the washing of the robe is the act of the believer, though Christ supplies the means of cleansing. The blood of the Lamb has atoned for the sin of the world (Jn 1:29; Rev 1:5), yet the sinner must wash his sins away. The Apocalypse stresses repentance as man's role in getting rid of sin (2:5, 16, 21-22, etc.).

The Old Testament source of Rev 7:14 is Dan 12:10: "Many shall

purify themselves and make themselves white and be refined."[1] 1 Jn 3:3 also indicates that the believer "purifies himself as he is pure" as does 2 Cor 7:1: "let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, and make holiness perfect in the fear of God." These verses stress the human component in getting rid of sin, though the divine is also vital.

4. He must refrain from soiling the robe. In Sardis were some who had not "soiled their garments" (Rev 3:4). Righteous character includes not only cleansing from sin, but power to avoid sinning. The verb for soil (molunō) is used again in 14:4, suggesting the meaning the Revelator had in mind: "It is these who have not defiled themselves with women, for they are chaste." The sin here is defection to apostate religion (symbolized by Jezebel [2:20] and the harlot [17:1]); hence, to be undefiled is to be loyal to Christ.

5. He must attain to the performance of good works. "The fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints" (Rev. 19:8).[2] Good works are an important part of righteous character, but they are wrought out in cooperation with God (2:26). The good works specifically mentioned in the Apocalypse relate to fidelity to Christ through persecution. This fidelity, then, becomes the "fine linen" of the saints.

It is thus through obtaining and maintaining the righteous

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[1]This RSV translation is to be preferred to the AV, "Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried." The first two verbs are hithpael (reflexive) whereas the third is niphal (passive).

[2]Some understand dikaiōmata as righteous decrees rather than righteous deeds, since dikaiōma often means the judicial sentence of God for mercy or condemnation, as in Rev 15:4 (Morris, Revelation, pp. 227, 189-90). The meaning would then be that the fine linen is the sentence that justifies the saints (ibid.). The difficulty, as Ladd points out, is that the plural does not fit too well (Ladd, Revelation, p. 249), neither does the genitive, "of the saints."

character of Christ that the Bride is said to have "made herself ready" (19:7). This is the human component of character development. The divine component is as follows:

1. Christ must provide the righteous character that the saints receive (19:8; 3:18). Christ in His humanity wrought out the righteous character that makes man righteous (Rom 5:18-19).

2. The Lamb must be slain (Rev 5:6) to atone for sin (1:5) so that sinners may wash their robes in His blood (7:14). All victory over sin is predicated upon the cross.

3. Washing is seen in Scripture as a cooperative act, involving both the work of man (see previous section) and the work of God. "I bathed you with water and washed . . . you" (Ezek 16:9); "that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word" (Eph 5:26). Man's work is to come to Christ through repentance for cleansing (as a result of God's initiative), while Christ's work is to forgive and cleanse through His atoning sacrifice.

4. He clothes the saints in the fine linen--"it was granted her to be clothed" (19:8). Clothing the saints in the robe of righteousness is a divine function. "I swathed you in fine linen and covered you with silk"; "your beauty . . . was perfect through the splendor which I had bestowed upon you" (Ezek 16:10, 14); "he has covered me with the robe of righteousness" (Isa 61:10; cf. Lk 15:22).

The figure of the white robe usually applies to the righteous character of Christ imputed to the sinner, resulting in perfection and splendor (Ezek 16:14; Eph 5:27). Rev 19:8, however, states that the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. Since this is granted to the Bride by Christ (ibid.), it follows that He empowers the saints

to do righteous deeds. The figure of the robe is thus broadened to include the imparted character of Christ.[1] This does not deny the Pauline doctrine of justification, but suggests that a transformed life is the proper result of justification; believers are created for divinely prepared good works (Eph 2:10).[2] We have mentioned that the righteousness required in the Apocalypse is fidelity to Christ in spite of persecution and death; this fidelity, then, is achieved only through Christ's keeping power (3:10) and through union with Him (see next section). Righteous character, then, is a joint endeavor of the divine and human.

Eyesalve. The Laodiceans need eyesalve from Christ to cure their blindness which has left them unable to see themselves as they really are (3:17). The eyesalve would enable them to see the vision of Christ (1:13-16) and the eyes "like a flame of fire" (v. 14; 2:18), which would lay bare their hypocrisy. When one has seen Christ, he is able to see himself in his need and to come to Christ for true riches.

"Open the door"

The nature of union with Christ which results in the development of righteous character is described in the figure of the knocking Christ:

> "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any one hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me" (3:20).

Several principles emerge from the symbolism used here.

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[1]See Lenski, Revelation, pp. 542-543 and Hoeksema, Behold He Cometh, p. 518.

[2]Mounce, Revelation, p. 340.

First, the divine-human relationship is initiated by God. His search for man is prior to man's search for Him. Man finds God by responding to His overtures.

Second, Christ respects human freedom. He stands outside the door. He does not force an entrance though He has complete rights to dominion over man through creation (4:11) and redemption (5:9-10). He respects the right of eminent domain with which He has endowed each individual, and will not cross the circle of privacy without permission. He recognizes that there can be no character development without choice-making.

Third, Christ does not remain without special permission. It is possible that the sinful nature reasserts itself so that He must ask for readmission every day. It is certain that Laodicea had once admitted Him in the past--since it is a backslidden church--but failed to readmit Him. So great is His respect for human choice that He does not accept any choice as final but requires constant reaffirmation of the decision. He has to be urged to come in (Lk 24:28-29).

Fourth, the occupant must hear His voice before he can open the door (Rev. 3:20; cf. 22). How does one hear? The voice of Christ (here equated with that of the Spirit) is found in the written messages to the churches. It must be read to be heard (1:3). The knock and the call of Christ are heard in the Word.

Fifth, the occupant must open the door. This takes human will and action. The work of character-building is a divine-human enterprise, a combination of divine power with human effort. Without Him we cannot (Jn 15:5); without us He will not.

Sixth, the meal which Christ desired to share was the deipnon.

the leisurely evening meal when there was time for unlimited and unhurried fellowship together. The promise is of intimate friendship with Christ.[1] The figure is designed to show the need for an unhurried, meaningful devotional life with Christ.

"He who conquers"

Righteous character is developed through conquering. The word conquer (nikaō) in its different forms appears seventeen times, showing how vital this concept is in the Apocalypse.

What are the foes to be conquered? First there is sin in the saints, the most prominent being apostasy from Christ as seen in five of the seven churches. Fear of death must also be overcome (2:10) since many of the saints will become martyrs (6:11). The saints must overcome the accusations of Satan (12:10) who accuses them of sin (as in Job 1:9f. and Zech 3:1). They must conquer the beast and its image and the number of its name (Rev 15:2). The expression "he who conquers" in the absolute sense (i.e., with no direct object) occurs eight times in the book (in the letters and in 21:7).

Victory in two stages. The victory of the saints rests upon the prior victory of Christ which He achieves in two stages: at the cross and at the eschaton.[2]

The cross. The decisive victory over Satan was achieved at the cross. "The Lion of the tribe of Judah . . . has conquered" by dying as a Lamb (5:5-6). His death freed the captives from sin (1:5) and

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[1] Barclay, Revelation, 1:186-187.

[2] Aune, "St. John's Portrait," p. 139.

paid the price of their ransom (5:9). His blood made possible constant cleansing from sin (7:14; 22:14) and victory over the accusations of Satan (12:11). By His death and resurrection, Christ conquered death itself (1:17-18).

Christ's victory at the cross was so decisive that it affected not only the future but the past. It went into effect proleptically at the foundation of the world, and hence has been available to all men since the fall. Jesus was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world (13:8).[1] The names of the elect were written in the book of life from the foundation of the world (17:8). The gospel of the cross is thus "an eternal gospel" (14:6).

The cross led to the exaltation and reign of Christ. The Child of the woman, whom the dragon tried to destroy (at the cross) was caught up to God and His throne (12:4-5). Through the cross, salvation, the kingdom of God, and the authority of Christ came (12:10) and Satan was cast out (ibid., Jn 12:31-32).

The eschaton. Christ's victory at the cross assures final victory at the eschaton. The cross was the decisive battle--"D-Day"--though the war must continue until "V-Day"--Victory Day. Hope for the future can now be supported by faith in the past, since the cross is the guarantee of future triumph.[2] The church lies in tension between

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[1]The Greek allows this rendering, as well as that the names have been written in the book of life since the foundation of the world.

[2]Oscar Cullman, Christ and Time: The Primitive Christian Conception of Time and History, trans. Floyd V. Filson (London: SCM Press, 1946), pp. 84, 86-87.

the historical victory of Christ and His ultimate victory.[1] Because He conquered at the cross (Rev 12:11), Christ goes forth like a rider on a white horse "conquering and to conquer" (6:2). In the final battle, when the beast and the ten kings make war on the Lamb, "the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings" (17:14).

How the saints conquer. The saints conquer by participating in and appropriating Christ's victory to themselves through connection with Him (3:21; 17:14).

Victory at the cross. The saints achieve victory through a backward look at the cross:

1. Victory over sin. The saints begin their warfare with the accomplished fact of Christ's victory. His death--His blood--freed them from bondage to sin (1:5) as a slave is freed from a master. Now they are free to serve Christ (cf. Rom 6:17-18). Legally they are free from sin, but experientially they still have to overcome it on a continuing basis (ho nikōn means "he who keeps on conquering"). Thus Christ commands them to repent and conquer. In the letters to the churches may be seen the same tension between the indicative ("He has freed us from our sins") and the imperative ("Repent," "Do the first works") as is found in the Pauline writings.[2] The indicative involves the already accomplished victory over sin; the imperative involves the exhortation to live out that victory. Obeying the imperative requires effort, but the effort is in union with divine power: Christ is with His churches (Rev 2:1); the "seven spirits of God" give life to a dying church (3:1-2); Christ comes in to the one who opens the door (3:20).

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[1] Bissi, "Kerygma," p. 16. [2] Ladd, Theology of NT, pp. 524-525.

The question often arises as to whether the saints, especially those of the last days, will ever achieve total victory over sin in this life. Or will they be saved in a sinful state, covered by the imputed merits of Christ?

It is clear from the Apocalypse that only those who conquer sin will receive the blessings of eternal life (2:7, 11, 26, etc.). The saints to whom John's book is addressed, whether of his day or ours, are to live in an adversarial relationship to sin. They can never reach an accommodation with it. They are to conquer it.

Do they ever achieve final victory over it in this life? Can they ever say, "I have conquered; there is no more sin in my life"? In the Revelation, only Jesus has conquered in the absolute sense (3:21; 5:5). The present continuous tense of the Greek indicates that the saints "keep on conquering" (2:7, 11, etc.; 21:7), even until the time when the seven last plagues are being poured out (15:2). This indicates that they can never lay down the warfare against sin in this life. They are always to be conquering the sinful nature within (as in the messages to the churches) and the enemy without (12:11). Only when they have laid down their lives in death (12:11) or sit down with Christ on His throne (3:21) can they claim final victory (indicated by the aorist tense of the verb conquer.)

2. Victory over the accuser. Through Christ's victory at the cross, the saints overcome the accusations of the devil (12:10-11). The sins of which he accuses them have all been atoned for at the cross. He has no case against them.

3. Victory through martyrdom. The saints overcome Satan

through uniting with Christ in His death. Many are destined to be slain (6:11) as He was slain (5:6). But "they have conquered [Satan] by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death" (12:11). The view of the Lamb's sacrifice for them enables them to love Him more than their own lives (ibid.), giving courage for martyrdom. Furthermore, the church under persecution receives special help: the woman is given eagles' wings to bear her to the wilderness to be nourished of God (12:13). Eagles' wings represent the supporting power of God: "I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself" (Ex 19:4); "Like an eagle . . . bearing them on its pinions, the Lord alone did lead him" (Dt 32:11-12); "They who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles" (Isa 40:31). God imparts special grace and support for His persecuted saints.

The followers of the Lamb choose the way of the Lamb in a self-sacrifice which alone can overcome the principle of selfishness and sin that dominates the world.[1] Their death is not loss, but victory. Yet in a broader sense, every disciple of Jesus must in principle be a martyr. He must be ready to lay down his life for his faith; he must take up the cross (Mk 8:34; Mt 10:38).[2]

Thus the cross gives the saints victory over sin, Satan, and death.

Eschatological victory. The Revelator has a unique way of demonstrating that the eschatological victory is already won by Christ, needing only to be appropriated by the saints. In a pattern that

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[1]Mounce, "Christology," p. 50. [2]Ladd, Revelation, p. 41.

recurs throughout the book, he pictures the embattled saints--still struggling with Antichrist through the tribulation and plagues--as secure in Christ (Rev 11:1), reflecting His image (14:1, 4-5), singing songs of triumph (15:2-3), crying Hallelujah (19:1-3), and sweeping through the skies as conquering armies (19:14-15).

The final war between the Lamb and the beast, and the followers of each, is pictured in terms of the holy city under attack by the armies of the beast. This picture emerges most clearly in chapter 20, when at the end of the thousand years Satan leads the nations of earth to battle against "the camp of the saints and the beloved city" (vv. 3-9). That battle is but a continuation of the warfare preceding the second advent. At the end of the millennium the saints are literally present in a literal city surrounded by literal armies; before the millennium they are spiritually present in a spiritual city surrounded by spiritual armies. The "warfare" involves persecution over the issue of worship (13:15; 14:7). But though the saints are outwardly persecuted, they are spiritually safe with the Lamb in the city. Each successive eschatological event witnesses their triumph.

Rev 11, a preview of the prophecies to follow, illustrates John's concept of accomplished victory. Here the Gentile hordes invade and trample over the holy city, reaching as far as the outer court, but are unable to penetrate the temple (naos, inner shrine), which has been measured off for protection (vv. 1-2).[1] The trampling of the temple and city for forty-two months is a figure of Antichrist's persecution

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[1]Measuring means setting apart for either protection (Zech 2:1-5; Ezek 40-43) or destruction (2 Ki 21:13-14; Isa 34:11; Ladd, Revelation, pp. 151-152).

of the saints (Dan 8:14; 7:25; Rev 13:5-7). Like the seal upon the foreheads of the saints (7:2-3), the measuring of the temple symbolizes security against spiritual danger, but not immunity from persecution and martyrdom. The enemy may "conquer" the saints (the witnesses are killed--11:7; cf. 13:7), but he cannot touch their real source of life in Christ (the witnesses are raised and ascend to heaven--11:11-12).[1] The inner shrine of the temple, symbolizing God's union with His people, remains inviolate.

The same pattern is seen in chapters 13 and 14. Underlying the conflict between the beast and the saints is the figure of a sanctuary (13:6) and city (14:20) under attack by the beast and his hordes of cavalry (ibid.; cf. 9:16; 19:18-19). While the beast is attacking the saints with economic sanctions and the death decree (13:17, 15), and placing his mark upon all who dwell on earth (13:8), the 144,000 saints are standing with the Lamb upon Mount Zion (14:1) safe from defilement (v. 4). Antichrist may conquer their bodies by slaying them (13:7; 20:4), but their spiritual life with the Lamb is untouched and undefiled.[2]

The saints are next seen immediately prior to the outpouring of the seven last plagues (15:2-6). Physically they suffer hunger and thirst and are about to witness the scorching heat of the fourth plague (7:16). They are still conquering the beast and its image[3]--final

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[1]Caird, Revelation, p. 132; Mounce, Revelation, pp. 219-220.

[2]The battle concludes at the parousia (20:14), when the armies outside the city are destroyed, with blood flowing up to the horses' bridles (v. 20).

[3]The Greek of 15:2 is tous nikontas, the present continuous as occurs elsewhere in the book.

victory has not yet come. But spiritually they are standing on the sea of glass (15:2) before the throne of God (4:6) in the holy city, singing the song of Moses and the Lamb in gratitude for God's judgments (15:3-4).

When the beast and ten kings make war on the Lamb (17:13-14), the saints are "with him" as He conquers (v. 14).

The "great multitude in heaven" (19:1-8), rejoicing over the downfall of the harlot (v. 2) is still the saints, as the description of them indicates.[1] The downfall of the harlot Babylon (19:2) occurs at the time of the seventh plague (16:19; cf. chapters 17 and 18), just prior to the second advent of Christ (19:11-16). The saints, physically still on earth, are spiritually in heaven praising God.

Finally, at the climax of the battle—the parousia itself—Christ at the head of the armies of heaven confronts the armies of earth under the leadership of the beast and the kings of earth (19:11, 14, 19). Those with the Lamb in this warfare, as indicated in 17:14, are the saints. Their clothing, the "fine linen, white and pure" also identifies them as saints (vv. 14 and 8).[2] While in actuality the saints are on earth awaiting translation and resurrection (1 Th 4:16-17), spiritually they are with Christ on the winning side,

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[1]The word multitude (Greek, ochlos) in the New Testament always indicates people (as in 7:9); angels are called myriads (5:11). Similarly servants (19:5) are the saints (1:1; 2:20; 7:3; 10:7; 11:18; 15:3; 19:2; 22:3, 6); the angel called himself a fellow servant (Greek, syndoulos, 19:10; 22:9). Those who fear God (19:5) are always people (11:17; 14:7; 15:4) as are the "small and great," which is a comprehensive designation for men (11:18; 13:16; 19:18; 20:12). The sound of many waters (19:6) can also apply to the saints (14:2-3).

[2]The "pure, bright linen" that angels wear is linon (15:6) rather than byssos (19:8, 14).

sweeping through the skies on white horses in triumph over their enemies.

In chapter 7 the pattern is similar, but with a slight variation. On the eve of the great tribulation, when the winds of strife are about to be let loose pending the sealing of the saints (vv. 1-3), John suddenly sees them before the throne, ascribing salvation to God (vv. 9-10), having successfully come through the great tribulation (v. 14). Here the view is proleptic, a look into the future to give courage for the present. The saints are to face the tribulation with the assurance that they will come through triumphantly. While entering the tribulation, they are to see themselves as having come out of it.

Certain implications can be drawn from the unusual pattern the Revelator uses to describe victory:

1. This pattern of victory in the Apocalypse could be called "victory by faith." The saints conquer by looking in two directions: (a) to Christ's victory at the cross where Satan was decisively defeated, and (b) to the ultimate victory when Christ destroys His foes and vindicates His saints. Through identifying with Christ's two victories, past and future, the saints achieve victory in the present.

2. The trait of "patient endurance," so necessary for those enduring persecution, is undoubtedly developed through the vision of victory. Barclay describes patient endurance as "the spirit which can bear things, not simply with resignation, but with blazing hope, because it knows that these things are leading to a goal of glory."[1] The Revelator himself had this understanding when he described himself

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[1] Wordbook, p. 50.

as sharing "the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance" (1:9).

3. To be spiritually in the heavenly city with Christ during this tribulation undoubtedly means cherishing and maintaining the spiritual life with Christ by fellowship with Him (3:20) through the Word.

4. The pattern of victory in the Apocalypse described above is another example of inaugurated eschatology in the New Testament. The blessings of the future spill into the present because the kingdom of God, with its city and temple, are already present in spiritual form.

5. It is undoubtedly through "victory by faith" that Christ fulfills His promise to His persecuted church: "I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world" (3:10). He does not take them out of the tribulation, but He lifts them up spiritually to the heavenly sphere with Himself.

Emblems of victory: the name Israel. The 144,000 sealed saints who come through the great tribulation bear the name of Israel (7:4, 14). That name is interpreted to mean Jacob's victory with God: "You have striven with God and with men, and have prevailed" (Gen 32:28); "He strove with the angel and prevailed" (Hos 12:4).[1] As Jacob in his time of trouble (Jer 30:7), under threat of death (Gen 32:6-7), obtained victory by weeping, seeking a blessing, and prevailing with the angel (Hos 12:4), so the saints in their great

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[1]The name Israel is derived from śārāh, to persist, exert oneself, persevere (Gesenius, Hebrew and English Lexicon, p. 975, s.v. "Israel").

tribulation obtain victory through the persistent struggle with God which issues in divine blessing.[1]

The crown (stephanos). Most of the times in the New Testament where the stephanos crown is mentioned, it applies to the eschatological gift of God to believers.[2] It was originally a garland of leaves of flowers given for special merit or attainment, as the sports-minded Greeks and Romans gave to victorious athletes.[3] Later it became a golden royal crown of princely authority.[4] Jesus as Conqueror wears the golden stephanos (Rev 14:14; cf. 6:2).[5] His people, as fellow-conquerors, are also awarded the stephanos, though to receive it they must persevere, as marathon runners, to the very end. They must hold fast to the Word, or another may seize their crown (3:10-11); they must be faithful all the way to death to receive the crown of life (2:10). The church victorious is described as a woman clothed with the sun, with a crown of twelve stars upon her head (12:1).

Character development: an individual or corporate experience?

In the Apocalypse, is the work of character development seen as an individual or corporate experience? Does the church conquer as a body, or as individuals making up the body? Does one stand alone in the great tests of life, or does one stand with the protection and support of the group?

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[1] L. Hicks, "Jacob (Israel)," IDB 2:785.

[2] Walter Grundman, "Stephanos," TDNT 7:629.

[3] L. E. Toombs, "Diadem," IDB 1:839; Idem, "Crown," IDB 1:746.

[4] Idem, "Crown," p. 746.

[5] Though as King of kings He wears the kingly diadem (19:12).

The individual aspect

The Apocalypse says much about the individual (as indicated by the singular verbs)--one's personal experience with Christ, one's personal responsibility and accountability before God.

Sometimes the individual must suffer alone, as John was exiled alone to the isle of Patmos (1:9), receiving succor through a direct experience with Christ (v. 10). Antipas of the Pergamum church experienced martyrdom alone (2:13). Certain ones of Smyrna faced imprisonment and death (2:10).

A heavy responsibility is laid upon the individual in the nurture of the spiritual life. Each must hear and heed what the Spirit says to the churches ("He who has an ear . . . " 2:7). The work of conquering--overcoming specific faults--is always presented as an individual work ("He who conquers . . . " 2:11, etc.). Each is to be alert in keeping his garments from the defilement of sin (16:15). Each one individually is to hear the voice of Christ, open the door, and sup with Him ("If any one hears my voice . . . " 3:20). Being thirsty and quenching that thirst at the fountain of life is a personal responsibility (21:6), as is coming into the Father-son relationship with God (v. 7). Christ searches the mind and heart of each one individually, holding each one responsible for his actions (2:23). Thus it appears that in one's relationship to God, no one can hide behind a group or depend upon another's experience for acceptance with God.

Furthermore, at times it is necessary for the individual believer to stand in opposition not only to the world without, but to apostasy within the church. The Pergamum church contained "some" who held the teaching of Balaam (2:14); in Thyatira the apostasy was so

general as to be tolerated (2:20). At times one must stand against the majority in the church: in Sardis there were only a few who had not soiled their garments (3:4). Thus it is not safe for Christians to put their trust in humanity alone, or to go along blindly with the church. At times they must stand in opposition to the church.

The corporate aspect

However, there is a corporate aspect to character development. The church is often presented in the Apocalypse as a body, a group maintaining solidarity against the world. Under the figures of a woman, a Bride, a city, or an army, the church in its corporate aspect is presented, illustrating the strength that comes from being part of a group.[1]

The first picture of group fellowship is in 1:3, where a group leader reads the Word to a company that hears and heeds it. John, though alone on Patmos, was conscious of sharing the common experience of the group (1:9) as he corresponded with them (v. 11). Though Antipas went alone to his death, his fellow Christians stood by him without denying their faith (2:13) in the interest of their own safety. In the great tribulation, the church is pictured as a body spiritually with Christ—standing on Mount Zion with Christ (14:1-2), singing beside the sea of glass (15:2-3), following Christ on white horses (19:14), being married to Christ as His bride (19:7). It is as "brethren" that the saints overcome the enemy by "the word of their testimony" (12:10-11). Could this not apply in part to the fellowship

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[1] It is this church, considered corporately, that can be designated as "eternally secure," while the individual believers who make up the church maintain their position only as they remain faithful to Christ. Aune, "St John's Portrait," p. 136.

of the testimony meeting, where believers testify to the saving grace of God in their behalf? There is strength in the corporate experience of being a part of the body of Christ.

Righteous character through union with God: the idealized view

Through various figures of union with God, the Apocalypse presents an idealized view of the character of the saints. Righteous character is depicted as a glory which the church obtains through the indwelling presence of God.

"A woman clothed with the sun."

The first such figure is of "a woman clothed with the sun" (12:1), symbol of the universal church: as Mother Zion (Isa 66:7-9) she gives birth to the Messiah; as the Christian church she is persecuted by the dragon (Rev 12:13). The symbol is an allusion to Song 6:10:

> "Who is this that looks forth like the dawn,
> fair as the moon, bright as the sun,
> terrible as an army with banners?"

Since the sun is a symbol of Christ (Rev 1:16; 10:1 21:23-24; cf. Mal 4:2) the church here is clothed not only with the righteousness and glory of Christ, but with Christ Himself. (Compare with Isa 60:2: "But the Lord will arise upon you, and his glory will be seen upon you" [Isa 60:1-2]).

The picture of the church clothed with the Lord Himself differs sharply from the flawed and blemished churches of chapters 2 and 3. Perhaps the very contrast between the ideal and the real church is intended to give an understanding of righteousness by faith: the

perfect standing which coexists with the defective state of the church. However, the "fine linen bright and pure" of the Bride when she has "made herself ready" for the wedding (Rev 19:7-8) indicates that she has overcome the flaws in her character. The fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints (v. 8).

The tabernacle-temple

The tabernacle and temple are symbols of the union between man and God (Ex 25:8), the tent of skins symbolizing the humanity in which the divine Presence dwelt. At His incarnation Jesus became a living example of God tabernacling in human flesh (Jn 1:14); the individual believer is a temple for the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:19); the corporate church is also His temple (1 Cor 3:16-17; 2 Cor 6:16) into which individuals are built (Eph 2:20-22). Similar language is employed in Revelation. The conqueror will become a pillar in the temple of God (3:12), a part of the temple God is constructing.

The verb to tabernacle (skēnoun), as well as the noun tabernacle (skēnē), expresses the idea of God dwelling with men: "He who sits upon the throne will shelter them with His presence" (skēnōsei ep' autous, 7:15). God spreads the tent of His presence over His people.

The trampling down of the temple and city for forty-two months (11:1-2) is equivalent to the persecution of the saints for forty-two months (cf. 12:6; Dan 8:10, 13); but the inner shrine of the temple (naos), representing the inner life of union with God, was measured off for protection (Rev 11:1).

Rev 13:6 equates God's tabernacle with "those who dwell in

heaven," indicating that God's dwelling is His saints.[1] In this passage the church is viewed as ideally installed in the heavens,[2] seated "with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Eph 2:6) in spiritual union with Him. Complete oneness finally occurs when God and His saints dwell together in face-to-face relationship: "Behold the dwelling (skēnē) of God is with men. He will dwell (skēnōsei) with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them" (Rev 21:3). Here God and His people dwell together in the ultimate unity that was prefigured through the centuries by the tabernacle. At this time the characters of the redeemed perfectly reflect the character of God: "They shall see His face, and his name shall be on their foreheads" (22:4).

The bride-city

The bride symbol, frequently employed in the Old Testament (Hos 1-3; Jer 2:2ff.; Ezek 16, 23; Isa 54:5-8; 62:4-5), is another figure of the union of Christ and His people. The story of the stormy marriage between God and His people, with many rifts and reconciliations, reaches its triumphant conclusion in Rev 19:6-8 with the marriage of the Lamb to the Bride in fine linen. A previous allusion to the Bride is found in 14:1-5 where a company called virgins stand with the Lamb on Mount Zion, having kept themselves pure and undefiled

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[1]That "those who dwell in heaven" designates the saints may be seen from the source text of this passage, Dan 8:10, 24; also Rev 18:20. The corresponding formula, "those who dwell on earth" always applies to unregenerate mankind (6:10; 8:13; 11:10, etc.; Morris, Revelation, p. 109).

[2]Swete, Revelation, p. 166.

from rival loyalties (v. 4) during the betrothal period. The Bride makes herself ready by wearing the fine linen granted her, which is the righteous deeds of the saints (19:7-8).

By the time the actual marriage takes place, the Bride motif has shifted to mean the holy city itself, which is called the Bride of the Lamb:

> And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband (21:2; cf. 21:9-11).

Yet the saints are still included in the Bride-city symbolism since the city itself is symbolic of the church, as numerous scholars have seen.[1] Evidences for this conclusion are as follows:

1. In contrast with our modern concept of a city as a unit of buildings, markets, and houses, the New Testament conception of a polis is a united human settlement.[2]

2. In the Bible a city is often called a woman, which, in turn, means a people. This is true both of Jerusalem (Zion) and Babylon (Isa 52:1-2; 62:1-5; Rev 17:4-5; 18:2, 7-8). A city, personified as a woman, actually means a people or church. The symbols of Israel as a wife and jeweled city are brought together in Isa 54, no doubt the source of the imagery in Rev 21:

> "Sing, O barren one, who did not bear; . . .
> For your Maker is your husband . . . .
> Behold, I will set your stones in antimony,
> and lay your foundations with sapphires.

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[1] Ibid., p. 284; Hendriksen, Conquerors, pp. 239-40; Aune, "St. John's Portrait," pp. 146-147; Bowman, "New Jerusalem," IDB 3:543; Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible, 6 vols. (New York: Fleming H. Revell, n.d.), 6:1182. This does not deny the existence of a literal city of gold, the future home of the saints. It is only to say that the city is structurally designed to symbolize the church.

[2] Aune, "St. John's Portrait," p. 147.

I will make your pinnacles of agate,
your gates of carbuncles,
and all your wall of precious stones" (vv. 1, 5, 11-12).

3. In Rev 19:7-8, the Bride is identified as the saints; hence the Bride as city must also apply to the saints. Christ is not married to a piece of real estate, but to a people.

4. The holy city, trampled by the Gentiles for forty-two months (Rev 11:2), is equated with the saints who are persecuted by the beast for forty-two months (12:13-14; 13:5-7).

5. The names of the twelve tribes on the gates and of the twelve apostles on the foundations suggest that the city represents the Old and New Testament church of God. The picture suggests a structure of living stones, with the saints built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Himself being the chief corner stone (1 Pet. 2:4-5; Eph 2:20; cf. Rev 21:12-14).

6. The numerical dimensions and description of the city parallel the description of the 144,000. The twelve tribes with 12,000 in each tribe (7:4-8) match the twelve gates inscribed with the names of the tribes, and the walls which are 12,000 stadia each in length (21:12, 16), twelve being the kingdom number. The 144,000 standing with the Lamb on Mount Zion (14:1), perhaps in a hollow square with Him in the center,[1] constitute the living city--of which the golden city with the throne of God in the midst is a type.

If the city is thus a symbol of the saints as God's dwelling place, it creates a vivid picture of the character of the saints:

1. The city was prepared--made ready--"as a bride adorned for

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[1] White, Great Controversy, p. 645; Early Writings, p. 16; cf. 2 Esdr. 2:42-47.

her husband" (21:2). The work of preparation was the combined effort of the bride and the groom (19:7-8: see previous discussion), a joint effort of God and the church, the human and the divine, as is the nature of character development.

2. The city is made of precious jewels, gold, and pearls (21:11, 18-21). The twelve jewels of the foundations, upon which are inscribed the names of the twelve apostles (vv. 14, 19-20), correspond to the twelve precious stones on the breastpiece of the high priest, representing the twelve tribes of Israel (Ex 28:17-21). As the high priest adorned himself with the symbol of his people by carrying them on his heart, God adorns Himself with His people by indwelling them.

3. The city, with God and the Lamb enthroned in its midst (Rev 22:1), shines with the radiance of the glory of God "as a jasper, clear as crystal" (21:11). Its splendor derives from the divine glory within and the transparency (three times mentioned by the Revelator--vv. 11, 18, 21) of the gold and jewels through which it shines. The glory of God passing through the rainbow hues of the jewels suggests the splendor of transformed human nature irradiated by the divine. Of Jerusalem God says, "I will be to her a wall of fire round about, . . . and I will be the glory within her" (Zech 2:5). The church, and each member, is to be "the transparent medium, Thy glory to display".[1] This is the Revelator's picture of Christ indwelling His church.

4. The cubic proportions of the city (21:16) are possibly intended to recall the Holy of Holies which was also cubical

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[1]This is from Frances Ridley Havergal's well-known hymn, "The Church Has One Foundation."

(1 Ki 6:20).[1] The temple, long a symbol of the church, now expands to include the whole city: the city and tabernacle are equated in Rev 21:2-3, for both are the seat of God's throne. Finally the temple (tabernacle) disappears:

> "And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb" (21:22).

In the new earth there is no longer a temple to symbolize the union of God with His church because God is now literally in union with His church. One might say that the temple is now the Lord God enthroned in the midst of His people.

Thus the symbolism of the city pictures the union between Christ and His people. The church shines with His glory (21:11) because she has His righteous character.

Character development: the means of salvation?

The book of Revelation contains many references to obedience and good works (2:2, 23; 12:17; 14:12-13; 19:8) as God's requirement for His people. The question arises as to whether good works are the basis of salvation and acceptance with God. Is heaven to be gained by character development?

A clear theological answer to this problem is found in 1:5-6:

> To [Jesus Christ] who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father . . . .

These words suggest the exodus motif of God's act of freeing Israel from Egyptian bondage (Ex 20:2) and making them a kingdom of priests (19:6). In the exodus, God first delivered His people by His own mighty act of salvation, after which He gave them the law with His

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[1] Ladd, Revelation, p. 282.

totalitarian demands for the obedience of love (Dt 10:12-13). Grace preceded law. Obedience was the consequence, not the cause, of salvation.

The order in the Apocalypse is identical. Christ's act of deliverance at the cross is prior (1:5, 17-18; 2:8; 3:21; 5:5-6, 9-10; 12:7-8, 10); the commands to obey are subsequent to that. Christ's love and salvation from sin preceded the demands for love and obedience, making righteous character not the means of earning salvation but the result of God's prior act of salvation.

The hosts of redeemed praise God for salvation, ascribing the glory all to Him rather than themselves (7:10; 19:1). Acceptance of the gift of salvation, however, implies a commitment to Christ that leads His Bride to "make herself ready" by accepting the character of Christ, both imputed and imparted (Rev 19:7-8).

Character and the "delayed advent"

Is the advent of Christ seen as contingent upon character development in the saints? Has it been delayed by the lukewarm condition of the church? Nowhere does the Revelator make such an assertion, though one might imply it from a few seminal passages. The martyrs under the altar are told to "rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been" (Rev 6:9-11). The angels are told to hold back the winds "'till we have sealed the servants of our God upon their foreheads.' And I heard the number of the sealed, a hundred and forty-four thousand . . ." (7:1-4). A great multitude in heaven praise God "'for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to be clothed with

fine linen, bright and pure'—for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints" (19:6-8).

Two factors are suggested here: (1) the saints need to get themselves ready and (2) the number of the saints needs to be made up.

With regard to the first point, it seems conceivable that the sealing could be delayed if the servants of God were not ready. How they make themselves ready is stated a few verses later: "they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (7:14). The same figure of the white robe is used for the preparation of the Bride. In the white-robe imagery are included the ideas of cleansing from sin, justification, and sanctification. Clearly the saints must have righteous characters in preparation for the Advent.

Second, there are hints in Scripture that God has a number He wants to be made up.[1] Though Christ would have died to save one soul (Lk 15:4, 8, 24), He intends that the plan of salvation shall have no mean results. Even from the time of Abraham He envisaged a number as great as the stars of heaven and the sand on the seashore (Gen 22:17) from a multitude of families and nations of earth (Gen 12:3; 17:4). The Revelator sees the fulfillment of this promise—"a great multitude which no man could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb" (Rev 7:9). These and other passages indicate that God wants a vast number, and that He wants it to include representatives from all

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[1]Other references to numbers are as follows: "a hardening has come upon part of Israel, until the full number of the Gentiles come in, and so all Israel will be saved" (Rom 11:25); "'Go out to the highways and hedges, and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled'" (Lk 14:23); "the wedding hall was filled with guests" (Mt 22:10). God wants a complete Israel and a full house.

families of the earth (see also Dan 7:14). The prospect of such a group eternally saved in God's kingdom presupposes the proclamation of the gospel "to every nation and tribe and tongue and people" (Rev 14:6). Thus mission to the world seems to be a condition for the coming of the kingdom.

But there appears to be special significance to the number 144,000. It is built upon twelve, the kingdom number (Rev 21:12, 14) multiplied by itself and by a thousand. Clearly it is meant to portray fullness, completeness, with reference to the kingdom. In past ages God has usually had only a remnant of faithful ones to be His representatives to the world, as Paul explains in Rom 9-11. Israel's forces were usually depleted by apostasy so that God had meager resources with which to work in order to accomplish His mission. The history of the Christian church has not been much better, as the message to Sardis might indicate (Rev 3:4). Perhaps the significance of the 144,000 is that in the last days God will have, not a pitiful remnant, but a full complement of white-robed saints to represent Him to the world. Thus the last-day saints are characterized not only by the white robes (the possession of all the saints), but by numbers sufficient to make an impression on the world.

One more observation is necessary. It is recognized that apocalyptic literature has a deterministic rather than conditional view of history.[1] God controls the times and seasons (Dan 2:21; cf. Acts 1:7); He lays out the sequence of events in a straight-line continuum until the eschaton (as in Dan 2, the seals, the trumpets, the time periods). From the viewpoint of the Revelator, there is no

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[1]Russell, Apocalyptic, pp. 230-234..

conditionality in the texts cited above. He predicts that the number of the martyrs will be made up; the 144,000 servants will be sealed; the Bride will make herself ready. He speaks in terms of indicatives; the imperatives exist only by inference. This assurance should comfort troubled Laodiceans who fear that, by their lukewarmness, they might be able to delay the Advent indefinitely.

Summary: the Development of Righteous Character

The work of character development is shown in the Apocalypse to be an interaction between God and man. The divine initiative is seen in Christ's love expressed in the death which provided legal victory over sin (1:5), followed by His exhortations to experiential victory over sin (chapters 2-3) through union with Him (3:20). The church's response is to love Christ in return (2:4-5) and to heed His counsels (2:7, etc.) by repenting (2:5, etc.), keeping His Word and works (1:3; 2:26; 3:8), and being loyal to Him until death (2:10, 13).

All that Christ requires He first provides: He gained the victory at the cross which assures victory in the end (5:5-6; 12:10); His people are to appropriate His victory into their own lives (3:21). He provides the righteous character which the sinner is to "buy" from Him through faith (3:18; 19:7-8). Union with God produces a character described in terms of the splendor and radiance of the city of God (21:11).

In the Apocalypse, which draws upon exodus symbolism, character development is not the means of salvation but the result of Christ's prior act of salvation. The same sequence occurs in the exodus where God first delivers His people and then commands them to obey His laws.

Revelation indicates that before Christ comes the number of the

saints will be made up, their characters will be purified, and their mission to the world will be accomplished. These factors could be seen as conditions the church must fulfill in order to hasten the Advent. In Revelation, however, they are seen as events that will take place according to God's own schedule.

The Eschatological Test of Character

Biblical apocalyptic literature indicates that the final test of character--a test which will polarize the world into two opposing camps--will be precipitated by "the great tribulation," a time of trouble exceeding in severity anything previously known to history (Dan 12:1; Mt 24:21; Rev 7:14). The effect of this tribulation will be "to try those who dwell upon the earth" (Rev 3:10), fixing their characters permanently so that further change is impossible. "Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy" (Rev. 22:11).[1] At that time all of mankind will be conformed either to the image of God or the image of Satan, the two types of character being identified by two badges, the seal of God and the mark of the beast (Rev 7:2-3; 13:16-17; 14:1).

The final battle in the struggle between good and evil will end where it began, over the issue of worship. The dragon's original rebellion against God centered in the issue of worship--the desire to set his throne on high and to be like the Most High (Isa 14:12-14)--and the last conflict will be an intensification of the same struggle

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[1]The aorist tenses of the four verbs indicate the fixity of the state into which wicked and righteous have entered, with no further opportunity being given for repentance on the one hand or apostasy on the other (Swete, Revelation, p. 305).

(Rev 13:4; cf. 2 Th 2:3–4).[1] Since worship influences character--the worshiper being conformed to the likeness of the object he worships (Rom 1:24–25; 2 Cor 3:18), the issue of worship is vital to this study.

The antagonists in the struggle

Revelation depicts the opposing forces in the final conflict as two armies confronting each other: the armies of heaven (19:14) and the armies of earth (v. 19). At this time there are only two sides (ibid.), all of humanity uniting with either the divine forces of heaven or the demonic forces of earth.[2]

The sovereign powers on each side are the divine Trinity of God, Christ, and the Spirit (1:4–5) versus the demonic trinity[3] of the dragon, beast, and false prophet (16:13; first described in chapters 12 and 13). The identity of these powers is as follows: the "dragon" of chapter 12 is Satan (v. 9), its seven heads indicating the succession of world powers through which Satan has operated. The "beast" of chapter 13, a composite of the four beasts of Dan 7 (representing Babylon,

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[1]Ford, Abomination of Desolation, p. 236.

[2]In the Apocalypse, the two categories of people, righteous and wicked, are described respectively as "those who dwell in heaven" (12:12; 13:6; cf. 18:20 RSV; 19:14) and "those who dwell on earth" (e.g., 6:10; 8:13; 13:8). See also Minear, I Saw a New Earth, p. 261; and Morris, Revelation, p. 109.

[3]It is a trinity of powers, in function roughly approximating the heavenly Trinity. The primal power, the dragon, who gives authority to the second power (13:2), suggests the Father giving authority to the Son (Jn 5:30; Mt 28:18). The second member is slain and revives (Rev 13:3; 17:8), thus claiming the admiration of the world (13:3), as Jesus was slain and resurrected (5:9; 1:17–18), exciting the adoration of His followers (5:12). The third member bears witness to the second, supporting its claims (13:12) as the Holy Spirit bears witness to Christ (Jn 16:13–14); he performs pneumatic miracles (Rev 13:13) as does the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:2–4). (See Ford, "Abomination of Desolation," pp. 310; 236–237; 283).

Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome) is the epitome of and successor to these powers, corresponding to the blasphemous "little horn" of Dan 7 (as a comparison of Rev 13:5-7 with Dan 7:25 makes clear). Other parallel texts such as Dan 11:36 and 2 Th 2:3-4 equate him with Antichrist, who exalts and magnifies himself above every god, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God. Preterist commentators identify this Antichrist with the Caesars, especially Nero or Domitian;[1] historicists see him as the papacy;[2] futurists believe he is a power or individual yet to appear during the tribulation, prefigured by the Caesars of John's day.[3] The "false prophet," acting as priest for the beast by leading the world to worship it, has a lamblike appearance (Rev 13:11), identifying it with Christlike religion which eventually speaks like a dragon, or Satan.[4] Hence the "false prophet" can be equated with a form of apostate Christianity in the last days. The most prominent antagonists are the Lamb (arnion) versus the beast (thērion).

There are two rival governments represented by two thrones. The central image of the book is the throne of God (mentioned forty times in Revelation), a throne shared with the Lamb (3:21; 22:1). In opposition to this is the rival throne of the dragon which he shares with the beast (13:2). All of mankind will be persuaded or forced to

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[1] E.g., W. Barclay, H. B. Swete, G. B. Caird, M. Kiddle, J. M. Ford.

[2] E.g., E. B. Elliott, H. G. Guinness, P. Fairbairn, R. C. H. Lenski.

[3] E.g., G. E. Ladd, L. Morris, H. Hoeksema, J. F. Walvoord, M. C. Tenney, J. A. Seiss.

[4] Mounce, Revelation, p. 259.

bow down before one of these thrones.

Issues in the Eschatological Test

The rival claims to worship

The divine Trinity commands the worship of all mankind on the basis of claims which are carefully chronicled in the doxologies of the Apocalypse. God is worthy of worship because He is the primal Being who exists for all eternity (Rev 4:8) and because He created all things (4:11; 14:7). Christ is worthy of worship because He was slain and redeemed men by His blood (5:9). As sovereign Lord and Judge, who determines the destinies of men (11:16–18), whose decisions are just and true (15:3–4), God deserves the worship of all nations (ibid.). He is to be worshiped because He overthrows His enemies (19:2) and glorifies His chosen ones (vv. 7–8). Thus, the basic claims of God to worship are His eternal existence, creatorship, redemption, sovereignty, and victory.

The antitrinity makes similar claims, every one based upon deception. Numerous commentators have noticed the many ways in which the false system mimics, or parodies, the true. Since the introduction of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, error has survived only as a parasite on truth. In the same manner it propagates itself in the last days. The beast feigns creative power (13:15; cf. 11:11; Gen 2:7) by breathing life into an image of itself, "a most impious usurpation of God's power".[1] It is wounded to death in the manner of Christ (13:3; cf. 5:6) but is healed (13:3), demonstrating resurrection power (v. 14). It claims sovereignty over the whole world on the basis of

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[1] Kiddle, Revelation, p. 256.

the authority given to it (13:2, 3) in direct challenge to the authority of Christ (12:10). It even exercises its authority for 42 months (13:5) or three and a half years (Dan 7:25), corresponding to the length of the ministry of Christ (9:27).[1] Unable to claim justice and holiness, it resorts to naked force (Rev 13:4) and the resulting victory over its enemies (13:7) as a claim to worship (v. 8).

In many other ways the false trinity counterfeits the true. It presumes to place the mark of its name--its own character--upon the forehead or hand of every living being (13:17), thus imitating the sealing of the servants of God (7:2-3; 14:1).[2] Marking on the forehead or hand is a parody of the divine command to bind the commandments as a sign upon the hand and as frontlets between the eyes (Dt 6:8).[3] From its throne it "opens its mouth" in the divine manner (Mt 5:2) to "utter blasphemies" (13:6), asserting its own right to be God (2 Th 2:4; Dan 11:36).

The "false prophet," appearing as a horned lamb (Rev 13:11) in imitation of the seven-horned Lamb (5:6), makes fire come down from heaven (13:13) in the manner of Elijah (1 Ki 18:38; 2 Ki 1:10), thus imitating the fiery descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2:2-4; Mt 3:11). It works great signs in order to deceive mankind (Rev 13:13-14; 16:13-14). Sign (sēmeion) is the Johannine word for a miracle performed not for its own sake, but to point to a reality

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[1]The three and one half years of Christ's ministry, however, are translated into prophetic time when applied to the beast (as the 3 1/2 days or half a week of Dan 9:27 become 3 1/2 times or 42 months in Dan 7:25 and Rev 13:5).

[2]Mounce, Revelation, p. 262.

[3]Barclay, Revelation, 2:129.

beyond itself—the claim to divinity (Jn 20:30-31).[1]

The false trinity sends out its "three angels" to the whole world to prepare them for the final conflict (Rev 16:13-14; cf. 14:6-11). It appears to unify the world under one monolithic religio-political rule (13:7-8) as if in answer to Jesus' prayer "that they may all be one" (Jn 17:21). Even the response of the world: "Who is like the beast?" (Rev 13:4) is a parody of man's great question, "Who is like thee, O Lord, among the gods?" (Ex 15:11).[2]

Weakening the beast's claims is the oft-repeated statement that his powers are only temporary and provisional, permitted by God. The six-fold edothē ("it was given") of chapter 13 (vv. 5, 7, 14, 15) indicates that both the beast and the false prophet are permitted to operate only by divine sufferance.

Thus mankind will be confronted with two systems of worship, each claiming divine origin and offering evidences to support its claims. While the symbolism of Revelation suggests that the final appearance of Antichrist will be as a monstrous opponent of true religion, there is much to indicate that in actuality it will appear as a subtle imitation of true religion, with tremendous potential to deceive. To oppose the beast will appear to be opposing God.

The mark-seal controversy

Character

In the final conflict between good and evil, every man will be stamped with one of two names: God (or Christ) or the name of the

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[1] See Leon Morris, The Gospel According to John (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), pp. 65-67.

[2] Barclay, Revelation, 2:121.

beast (Rev 14:1; 13:17). In antiquity a name was more than a label. It represented character.[1] When God proclaimed His name to Moses, He described His character: merciful, gracious, etc. (Ex 34:6-7). To know the name of God is to know God as He has revealed Himself. The full disclosure of His nature and character is given in Jesus Christ, who has manifested His name (Jn 17:6, 26).[2]

A possible root of the Hebrew word for name, šēm, is wšm, meaning a brand or mark.[3] The Greek for mark is charaktēr, from charassō, to engrave, cut into. A charaktēr can be the instrument used in engraving or carving (a stamp or die) or the mark wrought out on the instrument. Hence it means the exact expression of any person or thing, a marked likeness or precise reproduction.[4] Jesus Christ is the charaktēr of God (Heb 1:3). The mark stamped on an object or person was called a charagma. A similar word is sphragis, seal, which is either the instrument with which one seals or stamps, or the mark or impression of a seal.[5]

Thus the primary meaning of the mark of the beast and the seal of God (consisting of the names of God and the beast) stamped upon every individual is that everyone in the final conflict is conformed to

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[1]Morris, Revelation, p. 69; Abba, "Name," p. 500.

[2]Abba, "Name," pp. 501-502.

[3]Ibid., p. 501.

[4]Thayer, Greek-English Lexicon, s.v. "charaktēr," p. 665.

[5]Bauer, Greek-English Lexicon, s.v. "sphragis." The Greeks had the the idea that the powers around God gave form to the formless by stamping His image upon them so that the world became a copy of the imago Dei (Gottfried Fitzer, "Sphragis," TDNT 7:946).

the image of God or the image of Satan. Everyone bears the character of the divine or the demonic.

Other implications of the mark and seal

1. Ownership. Sealing to mark ownership probably goes back to an early custom of marking animals, objects, and men, especially slaves, by notching, slitting, or branding.[1] People were often sealed by marks upon the body: a servant had a hole bored in his ear to show he belonged to his master forever (Ex 21:6); circumcision was a mark upon the body showing that Israel belonged to Yahweh (Gen 17:9-12).

In ancient times, giving someone a name established a relationship of dominion and possession over it.[2] Thus, to have the seal of God means that one is the property, the slave of God, coming under His dominion and authority. The sealing is a marking off of the people as belonging to God, His possession.[3] Similarly, those marked with the name of the beast are the slaves, the property, of the beast.

2. Protection. Sealing was a sign not only of possession but of protection. Whatever is called by someone's name comes under the protection as well as the authority of the one whose name is called.

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[1]Ibid., p. 941.

[2]Adam named the animals (Gen 2:19-20), indicating that he exercised dominion over creation. To name a conquered city (2 Sam 12:28) subjected it to one's power. In times of distress, forsaken women ensured male protection by requesting the name of a man and seeking to become his possession (Isa 4:1). Yahweh gives the stars their names as their Creator and Lord (Ps 147:4); He also calls Israel by name, and thereby establishes His claim to it (Isa 43:1; 63:19, 2 Chr 7:14; Hans Bietenhard, "Onoma," TDNT 5:253).

[3]Fitzer, "Sphragis," p. 951.

That which is called by God's name comes under His protection.[1] In the Apocalypse, the seal of God protects from the wrath of God (Rev 15:2-3; 16:2) but not from the wrath of the beast (13:15, 17). Similarly, the mark of the beast protects from the economic sanctions (v. 17) and death decree (v. 15) of the beast, though it makes its owners eligible for the wrath of God (14:9-11).

3. Power. Having the name of a deity means having power with that deity. To be able to secure divine help, one must know the divine name.[2] To have the name of God and Christ thus means having access to the power of God (Jn 14:13; 16:23-24; cf. Rev 2:17; 3:12).

4. Fixity of character. In the ancient world vessels, houses, graves, and documents were sealed as a guarantee against violation or change.[3] The seal denotes reliability (Jn 6:27). Saints are sealed to make them God's own inviolable possession (2 Cor 1:22; Eph 1:13-14; 4:30). Revelation pictures the eschatological sealing affixed to the saints immediately before the "great tribulation" (7:1-3, 14) to guarantee their immunity to apostasy and their eternal security during

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[1]Abba, "Name," p. 502. The concept of a mark of seal to indicate protection is as old as the mark on Cain (Gen 4:15) and recurs throughout the Old Testament. The blood of the Passover lamb, sprinkled upon the doorposts and the lintel of Israelite homes (Ex 12:7) was a sign to the destroyer that he should pass over their homes (vv. 12, 23). Ezekiel's vision of judgment shows a writer with an inkhorn setting a mark upon the faithful to protect them from slaughter by the executioner (Ezek 9:4-5; Otto Betz, "Stigma," TDNT 7:661).

[2]See Jacob's request (Gen 32:29) and Manoah's (Judg 13:17). God discloses His name so His people will call on it (Gen 4:26; 12:8; 13:4; 26:25, etc.). Calling upon His name implies faith in His power (Bietenhard, "Onoma," p. 255). By revealing His name, God has, as it were, opened to His people a part of His very being and given them a means of access to Himself (Eichrodt, Theology of OT, 1:207). Knowledge of God's name thus implies a relationship with Him (ibid.).

[3]Fitzer, "Sphragis," p. 947.

that experience. Their characters are fixed in loyalty to God. As conquerors, bearing God's name on their foreheads, they nevermore go out of His temple (3:12). Being righteous, they are righteous still (22:11). In the same way, those with the mark of the beast no longer experience repentance or change of character. The plagues reveal that their characters are permanently fixed in hatred and opposition to God (16:2, 9, 11, 21).

5. Significance of the forehead and the hand. The hand and forehead, as the sites for receiving the mark or the seal, are significant. These terms are first mentioned in the Pentateuch (Ex 13:9, 16; Dt 6:6-8; 11:18, 22) in connection with the commands of God: "You shall bind them as a sign upon your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes" (Dt 11:18). The context explains that this means the total response of the mind, emotions, and behavior. "You shall therefore lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul" (ibid.); you shall be "careful to do all this commandment which I command you to do, loving the Lord your God, walking in all his ways, and cleaving to him" (v. 22); "you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might" in every activity of life, whether teaching or talking, sitting or walking, lying down or rising up (Dt 6:7). The forehead symbolizes the mind, the thought-life, and the right hand indicates the deed or action.[2]

Both rival powers wish to control the mind and behavior. All of the followers of the Lamb have the name of God upon their foreheads

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[1]Hoeksema, Behold He Cometh, p. 259.

[2]Hendriksen, More Than Conquerors, p. 182.

Rev 14:1), indicating total allegiance to Him. The followers of the beast, on the other hand, have the mark on the forehead (indicating belief, allegiance), or the hand only, indicating forced obedience without mental assent.

6. Six hundred sixty-six, the number of the beast. Irenaeus was the first who attempted to "reckon the number of the beast" through the process of gematria, that is, assigning numerical values to the letters in a name.[1] The methods used since then have been so devious and the suggestions so bizarre that it is more likely the meaning is to be found in the symbolic value of the number six itself.[2] Since seven is the perfect number, six, being one short of seven, is the symbol of sin.[3]

The creation week gives further significance to the meaning of six hundred sixty-six. Six is the number of the creature in all its fulness. In six days God created the world; creation was complete in all its fulness. Six is the number of man (arithmos anthrōpou, Rev 13:18)—man in the height of his glory on the sixth day of creation. The full week is not expressed in the six, however, but rather in seven.[4] The seventh day is the crowning day of creation, when God delights in His work (Ex 31:17) and invites man to enter into that delight (Isa 58:13-14)—when God rests (Gen 2:2) and man enters into that rest (Heb 4:10) of the completed work of God in creation and

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[1] Against Heresies V. 29-30; Minear, I Saw a New Earth, p. 260; Barclay, Revelation 2:132; Mounce, Revelation, p. 264.

[2] Morris, Revelation, p. 174.

[3] D. T. Niles, As Seeing the Invisible, (New York: Harper & Bros., 1961), p. 30.

[4] Hoeksema, Behold He Cometh, p. 475.

redemption (Ex 31:13, 17). Six is legitimate when it leads to seven; it represents man on the first evening of his existence entering into the celebration of God's creative power. The glory of the creature is right if it leads to the glory of God. Six hundred sixty-six however, represents the refusal of man to proceed to seven, to give glory to God as Creator and Redeemer. It represents man's fixation with himself, man seeking glory in himself and his own creations. It speaks of the fulness of creation and all creative powers without God[1]--the practice of the absence of God. It demonstrates that unregenerate man is persistently evil.[2] The beasts of Rev 13 represent man exercising his sovereignty apart from God,[3] man conformed to the image of the beast rather than to the image of God. Man apart from God becomes bestial, demonic.

Man at his satanic highest is demonstrated in stage six of all the numbered sequences of Revelation (excluding the seven churches which apply to the saints), which depicts the zenith of human-demonic rebellion. The seventh stage, by contrast, depicts the victory and sovereignty of God. Thus the sixth seal shows the kings, generals, and great men of earth gathered in terror before God (6:15-16) while the seventh shows the silence of heavenly rest (8:1).[4] The sixth trumpet depicts demonic hosts destroying mankind, which remains defiant of God

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[1]Ibid.

[2]Morris, Revelation, p. 174.

[3]Hoeksema, Behold He Cometh, p. 476.

[4]Fairbairn gives this meaning to silence: "The struggle of conflict is over, the noise and tumult of war have ceased, and the whole field lies prostrate before the one sovereign and undisputed Lord" (Patrick Fairbairn, Prophecy: Viewed in Respect to its Distinctive Nature, its Special Function, and Proper Interpretation, [T. & T. Clark, 1865; reprint ed., Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1976], p. 399).

9:16-21), while the seventh shows the triumphant reign of God and Christ (11:15). The sixth plague shows demonic spirits inciting the world into warfare against God (16:14), while the seventh brings God's triumphant announcement, "It is done!" as He breaks down the evil city, Babylon (vv. 17-19).

The mark of the beast, then, is a rejection of the sovereignty of God--the Sabbath principle which is designed to encourage man to seek his dignity not in himself or in nature, but in communion with God and participation in God's rest.[1] It is the Sabbath which distinguishes between the creature and the Creator, which reveals who deserves worship and who does not. It is the Sabbath which demonstrates God's sovereignty and man's dependence. Six hundred sixty-six by contrast is the symbol of the worship of the creature rather than the Creator.

The issue of the commandments in the mark-seal controversy

A study of the mark of the beast (Rev 13 and 14) and the seal or name of God (7:2-3; 14:1) reveals that the commandments of God are a primary issue in the conflict:

1. The mark on the right hand or forehead (13:16) is an allusion to Dt 6:6-8 (cf. Ex 13:9, 16; Dt 11:18; Isa 8:16), where God commanded Israel to bind His commands "as a sign upon your hand, and . . . as frontlets between your eyes," an injunction which the Jews literally carried out in the wearing of phylacteries. Hence, the mark on the hand or forehead is a parody of the injunction to incorporate the laws of God into one's thought and life. It suggests substituting the laws

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[1] LaRondelle, Perfection, p. 74.

of the beast for the laws of God.

2. In the Apocalypse, those who have the mark of the beast are set in contrast with "those who keep the commandments of God" (14:9-12). Hence it appears that the mark/seal issue has to do with the violation of the commandments of God on the one hand, and the keeping of them on the other.[1]

3. The Antichrist power is frequently cited as being opposed to the law of God. "He shall think to change the times and the law" (Dan 7:25); he casts the truth to the ground (8:12) and hates the "holy covenant" (11:28, 30, 32; cf. Dt 4:13). In 2 Th 2 he is repeatedly called "the lawless one" or "mystery of lawlessness" (vv. 3, 7-9).

4. The worship of the beast instead of the Creator directly involves the first four commandments of the Decalogue:

a. The first commandment, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me," is defied by the beast, who sets himself up as another god to be worshiped (Rev 13:8; cf. Dan 11:36; 2 Th 2:3-4).

b. The worship of the <u>image</u> of the beast violates the second command against the making and worshiping of images. The compulsion to worship the image of the beast is an allusion to Dan 3, where representatives from the Babylonian Empire (v. 3) were coerced on pain of death (v. 6) to worship an image representing Babylon (the beast). This image which had sexagesimal dimensions is suggestive of the number six hundred sixty-six (v. 1).

c. Taking the name of God in vain, a violation of the third commandment, is the sin of those who bear upon their bodies the blasphemous name of the beast (Rev 13:17, 1) who blasphemes God and His

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[1]White, <u>Great Controversy</u>, pp. 445-446.

name (v. 6). The saints of the Apocalypse bear the name of God in their foreheads (3:12; 14:1; 22:4) and hold fast to that name (2:13), never denying it (3:8). Receiving the name of the beast means animosity to the name and character of God.

d. The command in chapter 13 to worship the beast and receive his mark is countered by the command in chapter 14 to worship "him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the fountains of water" (v. 7), an allusion to the fourth commandment: "for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is" (Ex 20:11). The way to worship God as Creator is to keep His Sabbath in memory of His work of creation (Gen 2:1-3).

The Sabbath in the heart of the law corresponds to the stamp or seal of the suzerain in the heart of ancient treaty documents.[1] The Sabbath is a sign or seal of God's authority as Creator, the sphere of His authority being "heaven and earth" (Ex 31:17; 20:11; Gen 2:1-3). Sabbathkeeping thus becomes a seal upon the one who bears God's image, proclaiming God's absolute sovereignty over him and his covenant consecration to God.[2]

The issue of coercion vs. freedom

In the final test of character, both rival powers wish to imprint their characters upon mankind, as indicated by the universality of the mark and seal (Rev 13:8). Both wish to obtain absolute control over the minds and behavior of men. God's claim is based upon His sovereign right as Creator and Redeemer to create and recreate man in

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[1]Meredith G. Kline, Treaty of the Great King: the Covenant Structure of Deuteronomy, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963), pp. 18-19.

[2]Ibid.

His image. Satan, as the destroyer (9:11), seeks to mold mankind into the image of the beast (13:16, 18). Both powers employ effective means to win men to their sides.

Signs vs. truth

In the New Testament, signs and miracles are often cited as evidences for the divine authority of Christ and His apostles (e.g., Jn 20:30-31; Acts 2:22; Heb 2:4), a sign being a miracle whose purpose is to inspire belief. In the book of Revelation, however, signs are performed only by demonic forces (13:13-14; 16:14; 19:20).[1] These are intended to provide coercive evidence for belief in and obedience to the beast. The mention of a "false prophet" working signs is intended as a reminder of Jesus' warning in the "little apocalypse":

> "For false prophets will arise and show great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect" (Mt. 24:24).

Paul also warns against the deceptive power of Antichrist:

> "The coming of the lawless one by the activity of Satan will be with all power and with pretended signs and wonders, and with all wicked deception for those who are to perish" (2 Th 2:9-10).

The nature of the signs is suggested in the one specifically mentioned: "making fire come down from heaven to earth in the sight of men" (Rev 13:13). This imitation of the Elijah miracles (1 Ki 18:38; 2 Ki 1:10; Rev 11:5) is intended to mimic the fiery descent of the Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2:2-4), since fire is a symbol of the Holy Spirit (Mt 3:11; Lk 3:16; 12:49). It appears, then, that the signs and wonders of the last days will be of a pseudo-Pentecostal nature.

Performing the signs are demonic spirits invading the world

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[1] Though similar miracles are performed by the Two Witnesses (11:5-6), they are not called signs but plagues; i.e., their purpose is not to create belief, but to punish their enemies.

like the frogs of Egypt (Rev 16:13-14). In Scripture, frogs are always an allusion to the plague on Egypt (Ps 78:45; 105:30) during which the houses, bedchambers, beds, bowls, and ovens of king and serf alike were invaded by the pests (Ex 8:3-4). Babylon itself, a figure for apostate religion, becomes "a dwelling place of demons, a haunt of every foul spirit" (Rev 18:2). As demonism was rampant at the first advent of Christ, it seems destined to reappear with renewed vigor before the second advent. Thus signs and wonders, performed by the supernatural power of demons, will deceive those who dwell on the earth (13:14).

God's ultimate weapon in the battle for men's minds is not signs, but truth. He sends out, not three foul spirits working signs, but three mighty angels proclaiming the everlasting gospel (14:6-12). Their message is a powerful appeal to worship the Creator (v. 7) rather than the beast (vv. 9-11), to keep His commandments (v. 12; cf. 12:17), and to have faith in Jesus (v. 12). The test of truth is not miracles, but "the word of God and the testimony of Jesus" proclaimed by the great multitude who gain the victory over the beast and its image (20:4; cf. 12:11, 17; cf. 1:9; 6:9). "The word of God and the testimony of Jesus" must be understood as the gospel of Jesus' death and resurrection (1:18), His power to save from sin (1:5; 12:10-11) and transform men into His likeness (14:1) through the blood of the Lamb (7:14; 12:11). God's witnesses prophesy to the "great city" allegorically called Sodom, Egypt, and apostate Jerusalem (11:3, 7-8); a cry goes out to Babylon: "Come out of her, my people" (18:4). Those who come out of Babylon to unite with the people of God will have to take their stand upon the objective evidence of truth rather than the

subjective evidence of their own senses—the signs and wonders of Antichrist.

The death decrees

Greater pressures than those of the intellect will be brought to bear upon mankind. Ultimately all will be faced with the issue of survival—a choice between life and death.

The beast powers compel worship by means of an economic boycott upon all who refuse their mark (13:17). As a universal world power, the beast has control of all phases of life—political, economic, and religious. All who refuse it homage, being unable to buy or sell, are exposed publicly so that they can be singled out for the death decree (13:15).[1]

The third angel of Rev 14 pronounces a far worse fate for those who do worship the beast and its image and receive its mark. They are to drink of the wine of the wrath of God (14:9-10)—the seven bowls poured out upon the beast-worshipers, which produce the most terrible scourges ever known to mankind (chapter 16). And these scourges are but a foretaste of the final torment in the lake of fire (14:10-11).

Thus, the pressures upon all of mankind will be extreme. The commands to worship the beast on the one hand and God on the other are both enforced with the death penalty. In spite of this fact, however, it can be said that the beast uses force whereas God uses only persuasion.

The beast-syndicate "causes all, both small and great, both

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[1]William G. Johnsson, "The Satanic Trinity: an Exposition of Revelation 13," manuscript submitted to the Daniel and Revelation Committee of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1981, p. 27.

rich and poor, both free and slave, to be marked on the right hand or the forehead" (13:16). He makes (poiein), he compels them to receive the mark. The fact that they receive it on the hand or on the forehead is significant. To receive the mark on the forehead indicates mental assent and allegiance to the beast. Many, however, do not believe in the claims of the beast. He cannot command their loyalty, though he can coerce their behavior. Thus they receive the mark on the hand--they go through the motions of beast-worship--though it contradicts their inward convictions.

At the time when all of mankind is brought to the test, the beast's death decree is in the present whereas God's death decree is future. The choice is between present survival and future retribution, or present death and future reward. For the great majority, the concerns of the present far outweigh the concerns of the future. To go along with beast-worship is expedient for the present crisis. Thoughts of the future are temporarily dismissed (though they return with ever-increasing dread). Receiving the mark is the course of least resistance.

Thus, at the time when the world is tested, the beast uses force whereas God uses only persuasion based upon judgments and rewards to come. Yet He desires only the worship and allegiance that come from free choice. He does not compel anyone to receive His seal, though He is entitled to the loyalty of His creatures. Receiving the seal is not compliance with the majority; it is traveling upstream against the current of conformity. It is not easy to receive the seal: the qualifications are high. One must be a servant of God (7:3) with robes washed white in the blood of the Lamb (v. 14), who remains loyal to

Christ (14:4), following the Lamb (ibid.) even to death (12:11). Yet God graciously extends the invitation to all: "The Spirit and the Bride say, 'Come'" (22:17). All who choose may join the select company who have the Father's name in their foreheads.

Three kinds of people with three kinds of character emerge from the issue of coercion vs. free choice:

1. There is the whole-hearted worshiper of God. He voluntarily chooses the service of God, at great personal cost (and reward) to himself. He suffers great persecution, but preserves his integrity. He has a strong righteous character.

2. There is the whole-hearted worshiper of the beast. The mark on his forehead shows his allegiance to the beast and his fixed hatred of God. He has a strong evil character.

3. There is the half-hearted worshiper of the beast, with the mark on his hand only. He is too weak, too selfish, to risk the loss of his business or his life. He yields to coercion, giving up his option to choose by conviction. He complies outwardly, while inwardly his conscience condemns him for his cowardice. As a coward, he heads the list of those eligible for the lake of fire (21:8). He has a weak character. It is into this class that Christians are in most danger of falling, especially lukewarm Laodiceans who are neither cold nor hot (3:16).

The Goal: Perfection or Loyalty?

The 144,000 are those who pass the supreme test of the last days, the "great tribulation" (7:14). They have a unique experience that singles them out for special honor: no one can learn the song

they sing except the 144,000 who have been redeemed from the earth (14:3).

Do the 144,000 of the last generation have to reach a higher standard of character than the saints of any other generation? Do they reach a state of sinless perfection?[1] The crucial passage states:

> It is these who have not defiled themselves with women, for they are chaste; it is these who follow the Lamb wherever he goes; these have been redeemed from mankind as first fruits for God and the Lamb, and in their mouth no lie was found, for they are spotless (14:4-5).

It is best to analyze each segment of this description to discover the nature of their character.

"Not defiled themselves with women." Most commentators are agreed that this should be interpreted figuratively: porneia is spiritual adultery, yielding allegiance to the Antichrist powers. The "women" here are Jezebel (2:20-22), who introduces false religion into Israel; the "harlot" who is "Babylon the great," symbol of the leading apostate religion (17:1-6); and the daughters of the harlot (17:5; 2:23) who follow in her footsteps.

"They are virgins." The word virgin again is figurative: "virgin pure." It refers to those who have remained pure when tempted to fall away into idolatry (which is pollution and licentiousness). In this case virgin (parthenos) is the opposite of prostitute (pornē).[2] It is possible that the 144,000 virgins standing with the Lamb on Mount

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[1] By "sinless perfection" is meant the complete absence of sin and selfishness in mind as well as conduct on the one hand, and the complete expression of righteousness at every moment to the maximum of one's capacity, on the other. There are no sins of commission or omission.

[2] Gerhard Delling, "Parthenos," TDNT 5:836.

Zion (14:1) are equivalent to the Bride of the Lamb in 19:7.

The symbolism thus far indicates loyalty to Christ in the conflict with Antichrist.

First fruits. The 144,000 are redeemed from mankind as first fruits for God and the Lamb (14:4). The first fruits of all harvests, whether of grain, wine, oil, honey, fruit, or animals and man (in this case the firstborn, Neh 10:35-37) were to be consecrated to God. What is the significance of the first fruits?

1. The first fruits were special: fresh (Lev 2:14), choice (Ezek 20:40), and best (Num 18:12) because they were the most anticipated. The 144,000 are choice, first-quality fruit, "without blemish" (Rev 14:5).

2. The first fruits are the promise of a greater harvest to come, of overflowing barns and bursting vats (Prov 3:9-10). In the Pauline writings the first fruits of the Spirit (Rom 8:23) were a down payment (Eph 1:13-14) or promise of much more to come. So the 144,000 are the beginning of a much vaster harvest, the host of redeemed from all ages as described in Mt 13:38-43.

3. The first fruits, by virtue of their consecration to God, were holy (Num 18:17). Israel, as the first fruits of God's harvest among the nations, was holy to the Lord (Jer 2:3). The 144,000, constituting spiritual Israel, are also holy. As Israel, with 12,000 from every tribe (7:4-8), it is the first fruits of the greater harvest "from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and tongues" (v. 9). The consecration of Israel to God, both literal and spiritual, was to mediate blessing to all nations (Gen 12:3).

4. The consecration of the first fruits to God made the whole

harvest holy (Rom 11:16); it was a token that the whole belonged to Him.

5. The first fruits were brought to the house of God (Ex 34:26) for use in His service (Num 18:12-13). So the 144,000 are "before the throne of God, and serve him day and night within his temple" (Rev 7:15). They enjoy a special closeness to God; they "follow the Lamb wherever he goes" (14:4).

This study suggests that the first fruits do not differ in quality (character) from the rest of the harvest, since all are holy. However, their primacy gives them a special position and role as spiritual leaders.

"In their mouth no lie was found." This description is used a number of times in Scripture, either with the word dolos (deceit, cunning, treachery) or pseudos (lie, falsehood). The Psalmist describes the righteous man as being without guile. He who dwells on God's holy hill (as the 144,000 of 14:1) speaks the truth from his heart and does not slander with his tongue (Ps 15:1-3). The forgiven saint has in his spirit no deceit (Ps 32:1-2). An Old Testament source of the descriptions of the 144,000 portrays the remnant in Israel as those who "do no wrong and utter no lies, nor shall there be found in their mouth a deceitful tongue" (Zeph 3:13). Jesus recognized Nathanael as one such Israelite "in whom is not guile" (Jn 1:47). Absence of guile was also a Messianic trait (1 Pet 2:22-23, quoted from Isa 53:9).

Lie (pseudos) in the Apocalypse may mean more than common untruthfulness, just as parthenoi (virgins) means more than common chastity. This is lie in the sense of 1 Jn 1:6-10; 2:22; 4:20, the

lying of the antichrist powers (cf. Rev 13:14).[1] Not the least lie of this kind was found in the 144,000 (ibid.). Perfect honesty of speech was one of the characteristics of the servant of the Lord; and the 144,000, like their Lord, are utterly sincere and guileless.[2]

Does the absence of deceit in the 144,000 indicate perfection? This is a characteristic of Jesus Christ, who was sinless; but it is also the characteristic of the righteous man, the repentant sinner (Ps 32:1-2), the true Israelite (Jn 1:47) of any age.

"They are spotless." Does spotlessness indicate perfection? Spotless (amōmos) literally means without blemish or defect.[3] Behind the New Testament use lies the tradition of the Greek Old Testament in which amōmos is a Levitical term for sacrifices without any flaw that would make them unfit to be offered.[4] It means unblemished, sacrificially perfect.[5] The 144,000 are described thus since they constitute a sacrificial offering to God as firstfruits (Rev 14:4).

Amōmos in the Septuagint is the equivalent of the Hebrew tāmîm[6] which means complete, unimpaired, whole, entire, and healthful when applied to sacrificial animals.[7] However, the word tāmîm, as well as the Greek amōmos, soon developed from the idea of cultic perfection to moral and ethical blamelessness,[8] meaning innocent, having

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[1]Lenski, Revelation, p. 426. [2]Ladd, Revelation, p. 192.

[3]Bauer, Greek-English Lexicon, s.v. "amōmos."

[4]Swete, Revelation, p. 181; cf. Hauck, "Mōmos," TDNT 4:830; Trench, Synonyms of NT, p. 379.

[5]Swete, Revelation, p. 181. [6]Hauck, "Mōmos," p. 830.

[7]Gesenius, Hebrew-English Lexicon, s.v. "tāmîm," p. 1071.

[8]Trench, Synonyms of NT, p. 380.

integrity,[1] and blameless[2] in one's walk with God.

When applied to God, it is said that His way is perfect (tāmîm) (2 Sam 22:31; Ps 18:30; see also v. 25). Tāmîm is also used to describe the holy walking of the faithful.[3] To be blameless means to walk with God (of Noah, Gen. 6:9; and Abraham, 17:1), and thus to experience intimate fellowship with Him. (Note that the 144,000 walk with God—they "follow the Lamb wherever he goes" [Rev 14:4]). It means to seek Him with the whole heart (Ps 119:2) and enjoy two-way communication with Him (Job 12:4). The tāmîm person not only walks in the law of the Lord (Ps 119:1) by obeying all His precepts (Ps 18:22), but delights in God's will (119:14, 16) and longs to be steadfast in obedience (v. 5). It is significant that none of the men who were tāmîm—Noah, Abraham, Job, and the Psalmists—were sinless. Neither the Torah nor the Psalms assume that the sincere Israelite can live in obedience to the law without atonement and the need for forgiveness. The Psalms reveal the need for God's continual forgiving and keeping power in order for one to be tāmîm (19:12-13). Perfection, then is not inherent sinlessness but dependence on God's forgiving and restraining grace.[4] It means loyalty to God (Ps 18:25) and the intense desire to please Him (119:5). Thus tāmîm in the moral sense applies to an attitude, a relationship, rather than to a state of absolute sinless perfection.

The use of amōmos in the New Testament follows a similar

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[1]Gesenius, Hebrew-English Lexicon, p. 1071.

[2]Bauer, Greek-English Lexicon, s.v. "amōmos."

[3]Trench, Synonyms of NT, p. 380.

[4]LaRondelle, Perfection, pp. 113-115.

pattern. Jesus was the sacrificial lamb, without blemish and without spot (1 Pet 1:18-19; Heb 9:14). The saints are to be like Him, without blemish or spot (2 Pet 3:14). Peter and Jude describe what "spots and blemishes" are: reveling, carousing, adultery, greed (2 Pet 2:13-14), carousing, reviling, grumbling, boasting, flattery (Jude 10, 12, 16, 23). By keeping them from falling into these sins, God is able to present His people without blemish before the presence of His glory (v. 24). An obvious meaning of amōmos, then, is freedom from the sins of flesh and passion that characterize the worldling.

In Ephesians the goal envisioned for the church is that she be "holy and blameless" (1:4) not only in her standing--through forgiveness (v. 7), and the washing away of sin (5:26)--but in her state (v. 27; cf. 2:10). The purpose of redemption is holy living. Similarly, in Colossians the reconciling death of Christ causes the Christian convert to become holy and blameless (1:21-22), a status he must maintain by "continu[ing] in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel" (v. 23). To "continue in the faith" suggests the Old Testament idea of the "walk" with God, the steadfast rather than sporadic experience. The blameless life must be a moral life of obedience to the commandments for the Christian (1 Tim 6:14) no less than for the Old Testament saint. He is to live a life of holiness and godliness (2 Pet 3:11) in order to be found without spot or blemish at the coming of Christ (v. 14). In obeying God's will he is to be "zealous" (ibid.) as his Old Testament counterpart was to be "diligent" (Ps 119:4).

The New Testament concept of amōmos, then, is a standing that the Christian achieves by virtue of the cleansing (Eph 5:26-27),

reconciling (Col 1:22), and keeping (Jude 24) power of Christ in which he persists by steadfastness in the faith (Col 1:23) and obedience to the commandments (1 Tim 6:14). Amōmos is not described as sinless perfection apart from the cleansing and keeping power of Christ. To be amōmos is not a quality unique to the 144,000, a state of perfection achieved only by those who go through the great tribulation of the last days. It is God's evaluation of all saints, Old Testament or New, who, like the 144,000, have "washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Rev 7:14). It is this washing, and the walking with the Lamb, that make them spotless.

Character Requisites for Passing the Test

To be overcomers in the great eschatological test, the people of God must have the following qualities:

1. The experience of worship. Since the final issue is over worship, they must know what it means to worship God as He is worshiped in the Apocalypse--to ascribe praise, adoration, and thanksgiving to God, to receive all from Him and to return all to Him as a continual way of life. Only such an experience will enable one to resist the worship of the beast.

2. The ability to make choices. Through uniting one's weakness to Christ's strength, he must be able to choose for principle rather than survival, for the future rather than the present, for the ultimate good rather than the immediate benefit.

3. The courage to resist peer pressure, to face nonconformity to the will of the majority. When all the world bows down to the image (13:8; cf. Dan 3:7) the people of God stand erect in their loyalty to God (v. 12).

4. The ability to distinguish truth from falsehood, the genuine from the counterfeit. The thērion so closely mimics the arnion that beast-worship will appear to be Christ-worship. The signs and wonders, appearing as the work of the Spirit, will "deceive if possible the very elect" (Mt 24:24; cf. Rev 13:14). The people of God will need to believe truth rather than the perceptions of their own senses. They must be able to resist not only the compulsion of force, but the compulsion of evidence.

5. The quality of patient endurance. This means the ability to wait, to suffer over an extended period of time, yet to have an attitude of firm confidence and hope in God.

6. The strong sense of loyalty that comes from belonging to Christ, from being called and chosen by Him (17:14). There is faithfulness to Christ as a fiancée to her betrothed--the determination to be pure and true (14:4) under attempts at seduction (17:2)--in view of the coming marriage (19:7).

7. The experience of fellowship with the body of Christ. Since the saints are represented as a body--the "woman clothed with the sun" (12:1), the 144,000 virgins with the Lamb (14:1), the Bride of Christ (19:7)--it is their privilege to experience the oneness, support, and strength that comes from the group.

Summary: the Eschatological Test of Character

The eschatological test of character is precipitated by Satan's final attack on the church which causes the "great tribulation." The issue in the controversy is over worship, whether of God or of the Antichrist powers. Every individual will bear the seal of God or the mark of the beast, indicating fixity of character in the image of God

or Satan. The site of the mark and seal--in the forehead or the hand--indicates inward belief or outward conformity. It can be demonstrated that the first four commandments, especially the fourth, are at issue in the mark/seal controversy. The Antichrist powers use signs, wonders, and coercion to bring mankind to their side; God uses the persuasive power of truth. The commands to worship the beast on the one hand and God on the other are both enforced with the death penalty, forcing all of mankind to make a decision. Those who would pass the final test must know the experience of true worship, choose for principle rather than expediency even against great pressure, distinguish truth from falsehood, endure hardship over a protracted period, and be loyal to Christ.

The victorious saints of the last days, called the 144,000, are characterized by intense loyalty to Christ and the supreme desire to please Him. Absolute sinless perfection is not indicated by Scripture.

Judgment: the Evaluation of Character

The subject of judgment is a major theme of the Apocalypse. The central image of the book is the throne of God from which issue judgments upon the world. In a courtroom scene analogous to that of Dan 7:9-14, One is seated upon the throne, surrounded by twenty-four elders seated on thrones (Rev 4:2-4) who make pronouncements (4:11; 7:14) in the manner in which the elders of Israel dispensed justice at the gate (Ps 122:3-5; Dt 25:7-10; Ruth 4:1-10; cf. Lk 22:30). There are witnesses (martyres Rev 2:13; 11:3) who bear testimony (martyria 1:9; 6:9; 11:7; 12:11, 17), led by the Witness who is faithful (pistos) and true (alēthinos 1:5; 3:14). There is an accuser (katēgōr 12:10), also called Satan (from Heb. śātān, adversary 2:9; 3:9; 12:9) and the

devil (diabolos, the slanderer 2:10; 12:9, 12), who is thrown out of court when his case no longer stands (12:10-11). There is confessing (homologein 3:5) and denying (arneisthai 2:13; 3:8), finding and having (evidence) against (heuriskein 3:2; echein with kata 2:4, 14, 20), accusing (katēgorein 12:10), judging (krinein 6:10; 11:18; 16:5; 18:20; 19:2, 11; 20:12f.), and avenging or vindicating (ekdikein 6:10; 19:2; cf. Lk 18:3, 5); and judgment (krisis Rev 14:7; 16:7; 18:10; 19:2 and krima 17:1; 18:20; 20:4). There are also record books (biblia 20:12, cf. Dan 7:10) out of which men are judged.[1] The author drew heavily upon metaphors from the lawcourt[2] because the Apocalypse describes the final judgments issuing from the heavenly courtroom.

The Principals in the Judgment and Their Functions

God

In the Apocalypse God as sovereign Lord also acts as supreme Judge.[3] It is His duty to bring justice to an unjust world by rewarding His saints and destroying His enemies (11:18). He waits long before assuming power and beginning to reign (11:17), raising a question regarding His delay in executing justice (6:10). Before destroying His enemies, He takes measures to save them by pouring out preliminary judgments designed to lead them to repentance (9:20). While there is still time to repent, He announces through the three angels' messages the hour of the heavenly court session so that men may turn from the worship of the beast to the worship of God and avoid the

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[1]See Trites, NT Concept of Witness, p. 161. [2]Ibid, p. 162.

[3]This is to be expected, as ruling and judging are synonymous in Scripture (Ex 2:14; Isa 33:22; Mt 19:28; 25:31-32).

final outpouring of wrath (14:6–11). When this threefold warning is rejected, He pours out His final plagues, which avenge the blood of the saints (16:4–6; 19:2) and confirm men in their hostility to Him (16:9, 11, 21). Thus they show themselves to be worthy of God's ultimate judgment of death in the lake of fire (20:9, 14–15).

Jesus

Jesus, as the co-regent with God on His throne (3:21; 22:1) also judges (19:15–16). To the churches He appears as Judge-Advocate, noting what He has found about their cases (3:2), what He has against them (2:4, 14, 20), and His willingness to plead their cases before His Father (3:5) if they will repent. He judges His enemies by making war on them with the sword of His mouth (19:11, 15, 21; cf. 2:16, 22–23).

Angels

Angels play an active role in the judgment. The whole vast host of them is present at the judgment proceedings (5:11; Dan 7:10), witnessing whom Jesus confesses or denies as His own (Rev 3:5; Lk 12:8–9). They are the agents of judgments there decreed. They control the weapons of destruction—fire (Rev 14:18) and water (16:5). They restrain and release destructive forces upon mankind (7:1–3; 9:14–15) after marking special individuals for protection (7:3; 8:4). They blow the trumpets that signal judgment-plagues (8:7, 8, 10, etc.) and pour out the vials of God's wrath upon His enemies (15:7; 16:1). As heralds from the heavenly courtroom, they proclaim the arrival of scheduled times—as the end of time (10:6), the hour of judgment (14:7), the hour for reaping the earth (v. 15)—along with macabre announcements of doom and destruction (18:21; 19:17–18). An angel

warden thrusts the dragon into prison and locks him in for 1,000 years (20:1-3, 7). These same angels also have the more pleasant duty of displaying the rewards decreed for the righteous (21:9ff.; 22:1-2).

The twenty-four elders

The twenty-four elders appear to act as a jury, pronouncing the worthiness of God and the Lamb to rule (4:11; 5:5, 9, 11) and to save sinners (7:13-14). They also confirm that God's judgments on His enemies are just (11:16-18; 19:2-4).

The saints

The saints, in their role as kings and priests (5:10), are also given the task of ruling (ibid.; 22:5) and judging (20:4). After their resurrection, they take their seats on thrones (20:4; 3:21) to participate in a work of judgment that involves the world and even angels (1 Cor 6:2-3). Since these are the saints who are symbolized as questioning God's justice (Rev 6:9; cf. 20:4), they are undoubtedly given the opportunity to examine the books to make sure that justice has been decreed. They evidently have a part in determining the sentences of their oppressors as well as executing the sentences, for they are given "power over the nations" to "rule them with a rod of iron," breaking them in pieces as earthen pots (2:26-27). To "wreak vengeance on the nations," "bind their kings with chains" (cf. 20:2), and "execute on them the judgment written" is the honor God gives to His faithful ones (Ps 149:5-9).

The wicked

Standing before the Judge on the great white throne, the wicked appear as defendants in the final session of the heavenly court

Rev 20:11-15). They have no advocate (their leader being an accuser [12:10] rather than a defender), nor do they attempt to defend themselves. But they do have opportunity to assess the justice of their sentences. Before their execution the books are opened to their view so they can see the charges against them:

> And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Also another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, by what they had done (20:12).

They concur with the judgment of saints and angels that the rule of God and the Lamb are just:

> And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all therein, saying, "To him who sits upon the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might for ever and ever!" (5:13; cf. Php 2:10-11).[1]

The Criterion of Judgment

In the great session of the heavenly court, the churches are judged, the wicked world is judged, and Satan with his cohorts is judged. There is also a sense in which God places Himself on trial and submits to be judged by His creatures. All are judged on the basis of character, whether it is good or evil (Rev 22:11-12).

By what criterion is character judged as good or evil? In the Apocalypse judgment is based upon the eternal principles of God's throne—justice and mercy—symbolized by the commandments within the ark and the mercy seat above it. It is significant that the time to judge the dead is marked by the opening of God's temple in heaven and the exposure of the ark of the covenant (Rev 11:18-19, "covenant"

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[1]Those "in heaven" are the saints (Rev 12:12; 13:6), "on earth" are the wicked (13:8), "under the earth and in the sea" are demonic forces (9:1-3; 13:1).

meaning the ten commandments (Ex 34:28; Dt 4:13; 10:4-5]). The world is arraigned before God's throne (cf. Rev 11:18-19; 20:11-12) to be judged by their works (2:23; 20:12; 22:12) according to the ten commandments.

Judgment by law can result only in condemnation, since all are sinners. The only hope is in God's mercy, symbolized by "the blood of the Lamb" which washes away sin (7:14) and gives power to overcome sin (1:6; 12:11) and live in obedience to the commandments (12:17). Thus the crucial question of judgment in Revelation concerns how one relates to the mercy of God shown in the provision of salvation through the Lamb. For this reason judgment in the Apocalypse is Christocentric: it is based upon one's treatment of and response to the Lamb.[1] Christ as the slain Lamb is the central figure of the book (5:6), being called "the Lamb" no less than 28 times. Inherent in that designation at all times is the connotation of the sacrificial death on the cross; thus, confrontation with the slain Lamb issues in salvation or condemnation, depending upon one's response. Encounter with the Lamb divides mankind into two groups: those who prostrate themselves before Him in adoration (5:6-12) and those who prostrate themselves before Him in terror (6:16-17; cf. 1:7). Final judgment holds mankind accountable for its response to the Lamb.

Jesus explained that the purpose of the cross was not to condemn the world but to save the world; nevertheless, rejection of the cross brings condemnation (Jn 3:14-18). The cross, then, issues

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[1] Bollier, "Judgment in Apocalypse," p. 15; Caird, Revelation, p. 91; Hanson, Wrath of Lamb, pp. 159-180.

simultaneously in the salvation and the judgment of the world.[1]

Judgment on the Churches

The Christocentric nature of judgment is evident in Christ's evaluation of the seven churches. While the oft-repeated statement, "I know your works," may suggest the simple principle of judgment according to works (inherent in Revelation as elsewhere in Scripture), the issue is much larger. The churches are judged, not merely on the basis of observance or violation of a moral code, but on their fidelity or infidelity to the Person of Christ. He "searches mind and heart" (2:23) to discover dispositions and attitudes toward Himself. The good works of Ephesus—toil, patient endurance, doctrinal soundness, perseverance (2:2-3)—have no value in the sight of Christ (v. 5) without love for Him (v. 4; cf. 1 Cor 13:1-3). Many of the "works" cited in the messages to the churches are attitudes toward Christ rather than deeds. On the positive side there are love, faith (Rev 2:19), fidelity unto death (2:10), and loyalty to Him (2:13; 3:8) that prevent defilement (from munthanō, defile) through infidelity (3:4; 14:4). On the negative side, the greatest sin of the church is also attitudinal—not outright hostility to Christ, but indifference, represented by lukewarmness (3:16), lethargy to the point of death (3:1-2), and the loss of the first-love experience (2:4). Indifference in the face of Christ's supreme sacrifice of dying (1:18) and shedding His blood for the salvation of His people (1:5) is an affront to Christ that provokes the wrath of wounded love (3:3, 16; 2:5). Similarly, He finds the attitude of self-sufficiency ("I need nothing," 3:17) repulsive in view

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[1]Caird, Revelation, p. 31.

of the church's actual condition (ibid.) and its dependence upon Him for every spiritual necessity (v. 18).

Love and loyalty are the "works" Christ looks for; yet these are not mere mental or emotional states—but attitudes issuing in behavior. The Hebrew mode of thought (underlying the Greek of the Apocalypse), as contrasted with the Greek, is dynamic rather than static, concerned with doing and becoming rather than with being.[1] Faith is not a static mental acquiescence to a system of beliefs but a dynamic personal response to Christ expressed in obedience to the will of God as revealed in His commandments (14:12; 12:17). Faith and love are active virtues, evinced in witnessing (12:11, 17) and following the Lamb wherever He goes (14:4)—even to a sacrificial death (12:11; 2:8, 10). Love to Christ is a total response involving heart, soul, strength, and mind (Dt 6:4; Mk 12:30).

Jesus states the criterion for judgment: "I am he who searches mind and heart, and I will give to each of you as your works deserve" (Rev 2:23). Works thus include the disposition of mind and heart, and the life which issues from that disposition.

Special considerations

In His evaluation of the churches, Christ takes note of their handicaps and difficulties. He recognizes the hard labor of Ephesus in fighting heresy (2:2-3), Smyrna's tribulation and poverty (v. 9), and the unfavorable location of Pergamum "where Satan's throne is," (v. 13). He understands Thyatira's problem of infiltration by heresy and the "deep things of Satan," and hence lays no other burden upon

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[1] Thorleif Boman, Hebrew Thought Compared with Greek, (New York: W. W. Norton, 1960), p. 27ff.

them except to hold fast what they have (vv. 24-25). He notes that Philadelphia has but little strength (3:8) and that Laodicea is self-deceived (v. 17). But though He sympathizes with, and makes allowances for their problems and weaknesses, the rock-bottom requirement He insists upon for all is total loyalty to Himself (2:5, 16, 22; 3:4) even unto death (2:10, 13).

The accusation

In the judgment, the "accuser of the brethren" (12:10) makes a case against the saints because of their sins (cf. Zech 3:1-3). They overcome his accusations not by any defense of their own characters, which are faulty (chapters 2 and 3), but by their appeal to "the blood of the Lamb" (12:11) which has freed them from their sins (1:5) and made them white (7:14). Satan has no case against those who take refuge in the blood. Their testimony that they have been washed in the blood wins their acquittal (12:11).

The verdict

The verdict from the heavenly court in favor of the saints is represented in symbolism. Some see the white stone of 2:17 as a vote for acquittal (arising from the legal practice in which a member of the jury indicated his vote for acquittal by handing in a white stone).[1] The bestowal of the white robe also symbolizes acquittal and vindication. The martyrs, represented as being under the altar during their rest in death (6:11; cf. 14:13), were awarded white robes (6:11)

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[1] Morris, Revelation, p. 68; Trites, NT Concept of Witness, p. 160.

to signify their vindication and acceptance by God.[1]

A verdict from the heavenly courtroom is pronounced in 3:5:

> He who conquers shall be clad in white garments, and I will not blot his name out of the book of life; I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels.

This implies a judgment scene where books are opened and some names are blotted out, others retained. Those present are the Father and the angels (as in Dan 7:9-10); hence this is not the general judgment at the end of the 1000 years at which the whole wicked world is present (Rev 20:11-15). The future tenses of the verbs of 3:5 indicate a judgment future to John's day. In this judgment Jesus, acting as advocate, confesses before God and the angels those who are His own. Since the saints have confessed Christ before men in earthly lawcourts, Christ will confess them before His Father and the angels in the heavenly lawcourt (3:5; cf. Mt 10:32; Lk 12:8).[2]

Another verdict from the heavenly lawcourt is issued at the time of Babylon's fall:

> "Rejoice over her, O heaven,
> O saints and apostles and prophets,
> for God has given judgment <u>for you against her</u>!" (Rev 18:20).

This action was also described in Daniel:

> As I looked, this horn made war with the saints, and prevailed over them, until the Ancient of Days came, and <u>judgment was given for the saints</u> of the Most High, and the time came when the saints received the kingdom (Dan 7:21-22).

In this declaration, God gives a verdict in favor of His saints against their enemies.

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[1] This judgment is given before the <u>parousia</u>, during the time when the saints are "resting" in death prior to their resurrection (20:4) at the <u>parousia</u>. A similar pre-Advent judgment is implied in 19:7-8.

[2] Trites, <u>NT Concept of Witness</u>, p. 160.

Besides a verdict of acquittal for the saints, there is always the possiblity of a verdict of guilty. Jesus explained to the churches what this would mean. If Ephesus lost its love for Him, He would remove their lampstand from its place (Rev 2:5); Laodicea would be spewed from His mouth (3:16)--both figures for excommunication from the church of God. To Sardis He would come like a thief (3:3), a description of the fate of the wicked (1 Th 5:2-3).

The reward

Rewards and punishments are issued in the judgment "to repay everyone for what he has done" (Rev 22:12). The rewards for the righteous include resurrection from death (3:10; 11:11; 20:4) with complete victory over death (1:18; 2:11; 21:4), and freedom from hunger and thirst, tears, sorrow, and pain (7:16-17; 21:4). The curse of sin is eradicated (22:3). The saints also have access to the holy city (22:14) with its tree of life (ibid.; 2:7; 22:2) and the river of water of life (22:1, 17) in a new heaven and new earth (21:1).

The greatest reward, however, is the restoration of direct, face-to-face relationship with Christ and God. In a relationship as close as marriage (19:7-8; 21:2-3), the saints follow the Lamb wherever He goes (14:4), walking with Him in white (3:4). As sheep, they follow their Shepherd to springs of living water (7:17). As fellow kings and priests, they sit with Christ on His throne (3:21), judging (20:4) and ruling (2:26-27; 22:5) with Him.

There is also open communion with God. The Father Himself comes down to earth and dwells with them, personally wiping the tears from their eyes (21:3-4). In the ultimate fulfillment of the covenant relationship, He is their God and they are His people (21:3; cf.

Lev 26:12; Ezek 37:27), His sons (Rev 21:7). They worship Him unceasingly and untiringly in His temple (3:12; 7:15). Whereas in their sinful state they once needed protection from His presence (e.g., Lev 16:2; Ex 33:20), they now find shelter in the direct presence of God (Rev 7:15) who is the light (22:5) in which they delight to walk (21:23-24). The ultimate privilege which is restored to man is to look into the face of God (22:4), a face which no one has seen (Jn 1:18) since the fall of Adam. They can look into His face because their characters perfectly reflect His: "They shall see his face, and his name shall be on their foreheads" (Rev 22:4).

The Judgment of the Wicked

Not only is the church judged on its attitude toward Christ, the world is also judged on the same basis. When Christ comes the second time "every eye will see him, every one who pierced him; and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him" (1:7). It is because they "pierced" Christ, and continue to do so by rejection of Him, that Christ judges them.[1]

Though by virtue of His death the Lamb received authority to rule over the world (5:12; 12:10), His enemies contest that right, even making war on the Lamb (17:14). They choose to worship "the works of their own hands" (9:20)--the equivalent of self-worship--plus demons and idols (ibid.). Refusal to worship God leads to the worship of Satan (13:4) from whom is imbibed the spirit of self-worship (Isa 14:12-14) and hostility to Christ. It is Satan who first declared war against Michael in heaven (Rev 12:7), who killed the child of the

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[1]Bollier, "Judgment in Apocalypse," p. 15.

woman (v. 4), and who (through the beast) utters blasphemies against God (13:6). This is the spirit of which mankind partakes and for which it is judged.

A corollary to hatred for the Lamb is the persecution of His people. The dragon leads out in the attack by warring upon the woman and her offspring (12:13, 17) as soon as the "child" is beyond his reach (12:5). The beast makes war on the saints and conquers them (13:7). Babylon becomes drunk with the blood of the saints (17:6). The final outcome of this hatred against the Lamb and His people is the battle of Armageddon, to which the dragon, beast, and false prophet drive the kings and armies of earth (16:13-14; 19:20).

Hostility to God and Christ warps the characters of men, transforming them into "cowardly, faithless, polluted, murderers, fornicators, sorcerers, idolaters, liars" (21:8; 22:15) who commit "murders, sorceries, immorality, and thefts" (9:20). For these deeds--the outward expression of their hostility to the Lamb--they are judged. "And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, by what they had done" (20:12-13).

The punishment

The sin for which the wicked are judged is their hostility to and warfare against the Lamb. When "the kings of the earth and the great men and the generals and the rich and the strong, and every one, slave and free" (6:15) unite to war against the saints (19:19), they are suddenly confronted with God on His throne, and with "the wrath of the Lamb" (6:16). The latter expression has provoked much comment because of its incongruity: one wonders why the figure of the Lion (5:5) was not employed. But the expression was used deliberately, the

word Lamb carrying its full freight of meaning as the slain, bleeding Sacrifice. It is for their refusal to worship that Lamb, to accept His sacrifice in their behalf, to wash their robes in His blood--it is because they have been piercing (1:7) and slaying that Lamb from the foundation of the world (13:8) by their hostility to Him (cf. Heb 6:6) and to His people (Rev 19:2)--that they feel His wrath.

Exposure to the "wrath of the Lamb," temporarily terminated by death at the parousia (Rev 6:16; 19:21), is resumed at the end of the thousand years: "he shall be tormented with fire and sulphur in the presence . . . of the Lamb" (14:10). To the wicked, the Lamb who was intended to be the means of salvation becomes the cause of their damnation.

There is a further aspect of judgment beyond exposure to the wrath of the Lamb, and that is exclusion from life with God. The wicked surrounding the city (20:9), gazing through its transparent walls into its glorious interior (21:11, 18), realize that they are forever excluded from the life it represents. For "nothing unclean shall enter it, nor any one who practices abomination or falsehood, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life" (21:27). They are forever "outside" (22:15).

Their final punishment is extinction. They are "tormented day and night for ever and ever" (20:10; cf. 14:11) until they are consumed (20:9), destroyed (11:18). "This is the second death" (20:14; 21:8; cf. 20:6; 2:11). The lake of fire ceases to exist as it is succeeded by a "new heaven and a new earth" (20:15 to 21:1).

God on Trial

God also is on trial for the way in which He terminates the warfare against Himself in the controversy between good and evil. Since the security of His government for eternal ages depends upon His being perceived as just and righteous in His dealings with all His creatures, their evaluation of His character is vitally important.

The Apocalypse records complaints against God. Initially the martyrs, in figure, question His long delay in avenging their blood (6:10). The wicked, in turn, curse Him for the severity of His judgments (16:9). As God's plan works itself out, however, it is seen that He is fair. The long delay, allowing for preliminary judgments and opportunities for repentance, at length culminates in final retribution. The martyrs' prayers for action are heard: the very altar from which they made their complaint cries out that they have been vindicated (16:7; cf. 6:9–10). And though the enemies of God curse Him for His severity, all impartial observers acknowledge that the punishment fits the crime:

> "For men have shed the blood of saints and prophets,
> and thou hast given them blood to drink.
> It is their due!" (16:6).
>
> "Render to her as she herself has rendered,
> and repay her double for her deeds;
> mix a double draught for her in the cup she mixed" (18:6).
>
> "He has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication, and he has avenged on her the blood of his servants" (19:2).

Because of God's obvious justice, saints and angels unite in approving His actions. "Just and true are thy ways" (15:3); "Just art thou in these judgments" (16:5, 7); "his judgments are true and just" (19:2).

The greatest expression of the mercy and justice of God's character is the slain and bleeding Lamb (5:6) who personifies in Himself the love and the wrath of God (love for sinners, wrath against sin poured out upon His Son). The Lamb is the cause both for man's salvation and his damnation; each one can blame only himself for the choice he made.

Summary: Judgment, the Evaluation of Character

Judgment is a major theme of the Apocalypse, with all the action of the book issuing from the heavenly sanctuary/courtroom. God and Christ as Judges are assisted by angels, elders, and saints in the judgment process.

The criterion of judgment is the law, the demands of which can be met only by the cleansing and keeping power of the blood of the Lamb. Thus judgment in the Apocalypse is ultimately Christocentric, depending upon one's relationship to the Lamb. Confrontation with the slain Lamb issues in salvation or condemnation to each individual.

Satan, "the accuser of the brethren," points to the defects of the saints. They overcome by appealing to the "blood of the Lamb" which has cleansed them from their sins. By virtue of this cleansing the saints are rewarded with all the blessings of eternal life: access to the city, the tree of life, and open communion with God. The sin for which the wicked are condemned is hostility to and warfare against the Lamb. Their punishment is exclusion from life with God, and consignment to the lake of fire, where they are annihilated.

In His judgments upon mankind, God is recognized as just and righteous by all His creatures.

Summary and Conclusions: the Concept of Character in the Apocalypse

Character in the Apocalypse is defined in terms of relationship to God. Man was created in the image of God to reflect His character, which is the norm from which are derived the concepts of good and evil. Evil character in the Apocalypse is hostility to God and His people, as well as unfaithfulness to God or a waning love for God, all caused by the substitution of false objects of worship in place of God. Righteous character means exalting God as supreme in the life, worshiping Him, serving Him, loving Him, fearing Him, obeying His commandments, and being loyal to Him through suffering even to the point of death. This relationship to God invests the saints with the role of priest-kings to the world, which means that they have a prophetic mission to proclaim the gospel to every nation.

Righteous character is developed through human response to the divine initiative. Christ won the legal victory over sin at the cross, which is the basis for the saints' experiential victory over sin in their lives. Christ exhorts the church to repentance, to study of the Word, to a personal relationship to Him, to a life of witnessing to the world. All that He requires He supplies: the robe of righteousness must be "bought" from Him.

Character will be tested in the last days over the issue of worship, whether of a pseudo-Christian power or of God. All mankind will be judged upon the basis of how they respond to the slain Lamb. Those who follow the Lamb will enjoy eternal life with God; those who war against Him will be tormented in His presence and die the second death.

This overview of the concept of character in the Apocalypse

leads to the conclusion that relationship to God is the dominant emphasis of the book. The great concern of character education insofar as it is based on the Apocalypse should then be to bring human beings into a living, personal relationship to God. The supreme purpose of life, now and in eternity, is to worship and serve God.

This study makes it equally apparent that the author emphasizes the vertical dimension of Christian experience almost to the exclusion of the horizontal dimension of relationship to humanity, which appears only in terms of mission to the world through the proclamation of the gospel. The whole category of ethical concern for the needy and oppressed, demonstrated by feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, caring for widows and orphans, loving mercy and doing justice, as emphasized in the narrative and hortatory parts of Scripture (e.g., Gen 18:1-8; Job 31:16-21; Isa 58:7; Eze 18:7-9; Mic 6:8; Mt 25:35-36; Lk 10:30-37; Heb 13:2; Jas 1:27), is not mentioned. This omission appears to support the conclusion that apocalyptic literature is not concerned with ethics, that it views the world as hostile to God, doomed to destruction, and therefore not worth trying to reform. This view cannot be true, however, since another strong theme of the Apocalypse is mission to the world.

It might also be suggested that the cosmic perspective and symbolism of the book (e.g., a dragon warring against a woman in the heavens) do not lend themselves to depicting person-to-person acts of kindness. The symbolic nature of the book lifts it above the level of ordinary life. Yet an author with a burden for social justice could conceivably translate this concern into symbolic language.

The answer may lie in the mind of John himself, rather than in

the nature of apocalyptic as a literary vehicle. John's passion, in both his gospel and apocalypse, is to bring human beings into the vertical relationship with God. He organized the materials of his gospel around the theme of belief or disbelief in Jesus. Where the synoptic writers mention compassion as the motivation for Jesus' miracles (e.g., Mt 9:36; 15:32; Mk 6:34; Lk 7:13), John makes them signs the purpose of which is to inspire belief (Jn 2:11; 4:53-54; 6:14; etc.).[1] Even love among brethren was to be a sign to lead to belief in Jesus (Jn 17:21). The purpose of John's gospel to inspire belief in Jesus (20:31).

But belief is only the first step in the relationship he seeks to inspire. Beyond that he describes a spiritual intimacy with God that staggers the imagination. He alone of the gospel writers preserves Jesus' discourses and figures about union with God: figures of eating His flesh and drinking His blood (Jn 6:54), of the indwelling Spirit (14:17), of Father and Son coming to make their home with the believer (14:23), of the union of the vine and the branches (15:4), of being drawn into the very fellowship of the Godhead (17:21, 23-24). The disciple who had lain in the bosom of Jesus--who, in turn, had come from the bosom of the Father--selected the materials from Christ's life and teachings that would draw the reader into the same intimate union with God.

Though the vocabulary and mode of expression are vastly different, John's apocalypse builds upon this same deep concern. Humanity is divided into believers and unbelievers in the one (showing a dualism similar to that of the Apocalypse), and into "those who

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[1] Barclay, John, 1:xxiv-xxv.

dwell on earth" and "those who dwell in heaven" in the other. While his gospel describes God coming down to make His home with the believer, his apocalypse lifts the persecuted saints into the heavenlies with God. For figures of union, his apocalypse adds to his gospel the marriage motif, and the tabernacle and city indwelt by God. Clearly, John's two major works share the same burden for the vertical relationship of man with God. Similarly, his gospel and apocalypse both deal with the horizontal relationship from the same viewpoint: mission to the world (e.g., Jn 17:20-21; 3:17). Judgment is on the same basis: treatment of the Son (Jn 3:18, 36).

This study leads to the conclusion that John's view of righteous character as a vertical relationship with God expressing itself in mission to the world is not as much a peculiarity of the apocalyptic genre as it is a revelation of John's personal concern. He gives the first table of the decalogue primacy over the second. The ethical thrust of the book of Revelation could be expressed in terms of the first commandment, "You shall have no other gods before me" (Ex 20:3), or (stated positively), "You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only shall you serve" (Mt 4:10). This is the message of John's apocalypse to church and world alike.

But is John's message really deficient? If one is united with the Vine, will he not bear all the fruits of righteousness? If he keeps the first commandment wholeheartedly, will he not also keep the other nine? If he has a right relationship to God, will not every other relationship be right? If so, John has put his finger on the core, if not the whole, of character development.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS WITH IMPLICATIONS FOR CHARACTER EDUCATION

This study is concerned with the concept of character in the Apocalypse against a background of humanistic philosophy originating in Plato and Aristotle, with implications for character education. Plato, Aristotle, and John each had a distinctive world-view with a distinctive philosophy regarding man, ethics, and character.

Plato saw man as a soul who fell from the perfect, eternal world of Ideas because of the pull of the appetites which dragged the soul down to earth where it took on a body. Evil in man is the disharmony caused by the struggle of the appetites and emotions against reason. The solution to man's problem is the control of appetite by reason, aided by the contemplation of divine realities--the Ideas of Beauty, Truth, and Goodness. Such philosophical reflection enables man to live a life of virtue and frees his soul at death to return to the eternal world above. Plato emphasized knowledge of eternal reality as the means by which moral character is formed. He thought knowledge was virtue.

Aristotle rejected the concept of eternal soul and accepted as real only the world of sense, of which man was a part. Instead of deriving his values from a heavenly world of Ideas, he based them on the nature of man. Man's good (eudaemonia) was to reach the uniquely human goal--distinct from the goal of all other forms of life--of

engaging in rational activity. He agreed with Plato that reason must control the appetites, adding his concept that virtue is the golden mean between the two extremes of excess and deficiency. Aristotle believed that moral character is developed through behavior as well as knowledge: one becomes good by doing good consistently through life.

Neither Plato nor Aristotle knew of a personal God to assist man in his struggles against evil; they postulated instead an impersonal, transcendent Craftsman (Demiurge) or First Mover.

John's Apocalypse views man as the creation of a personal God, made to reflect the character of God, which is the norm from which are derived the concepts of good and evil. Sin is rebellion and warfare against God, motivated by the desire for self-exaltation. Sin caused such dire consequences that only God could provide salvation from it through the atoning death of His Son. Christ won the legal victory over sin at the cross which is the basis for the believer's experiential victory over sin. Righteous character is developed through repentance, study of the Word, the devotional life with Christ, the worship and exalting of God, and witness to the world. Man derives his life, values, and character from God.

Philosophical Dilemmas Affecting Character Theory

Plato and Aristotle stand in the headwaters of the Graeco-Roman stream of philosophy from which both the greatness and ills of Western civilization have flowed. They attempted to discover ultimate truth about man and the universe by the use of unaided human reason. The subsequent history of ideas indicates that such a quest is fraught with difficulty.

Problems with epistemology

Plato's vast system of thought has much to commend it: a holistic view of the cosmos and the nature and destiny of man, plus an "objective" basis for values. He postulates design and purpose in the universe, with universals behind the particulars revealing ultimate meaning beyond the material world. There is a way of "salvation" and a character to be developed to achieve eternal life. Idealistic systems, dealing as they do with noumenal as well as phenomenal realities--with spirit as well as matter--provide the most comprehensive views of reality.

Yet Plato's epistemology was rejected by his most famous pupil, Aristotle, whose reaction illustrates a major problem of idealistic philosophies: there is no objective method of verifying the truth of the system. Every such system is actually the mental construct of the philosopher himself, based on his own "innate ideas" and rational powers. Though it professes to give a holistic view of objective reality, with values based upon the objective order of the universe, it is actually subjective--that is, based upon the imagination of the philosopher. Because of this subjectivity there are great contradictions between the various idealistic philosophies.[1]

Aristotle built his system upon sense perception and logic, beginning with the study of particulars in the search for universals. His approach is suggestive of the empirical methods of modern science.

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[1]Descartes described reality as a dualism of two basic substances, thought and extension; Spinoza proposed a monism of a single substance, Nature; Leibniz saw reality as a pluralism of different kinds of monads, thus accounting for various elements in nature; to Hegel all was Absolute Spirit in a dynamic, dialectic process (Stumpf, Philosophy, pp. 249, 332, 337).

however, by finding ultimate reality not in a transcendent spiritual order but in the empirical world of sense perception, Aristotle laid the foundation for modern secularism which rejects spirit (sometimes even mind) as reality and accepts as real only the physical world of matter. Kant contributed to this outcome through his conclusion that sense perception plus the innate structures of the mind cannot arrive at knowledge of ultimate reality—i.e., the noumenal world which contains within it all the categories of meaning such as God, freedom, and immortality.[1] This means that neither speculative reason nor the scientific method can come to a knowledge of God, goodness, and immortality—all the values that give meaning to life. A study of particulars ends only with particulars.

A second problem with Aristotle's method is whether the senses, which are highly subjective, are reliable in determining the nature of reality. The British empiricists, attempting to base all knowledge on sense perception, came to doubt not only the existence of God but of causality, material substance, and even of the self--a position of total skepticism.[2]

Problems with axiology

Plato derived his norms of goodness from the transcendent world of Ideas, not verifiable by correspondence with reality. His concepts of beauty, goodness, and truth were the constructs of his own mind. Subjective philosophies and psychologies always lead to subjective moral values, as this study will point out.

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[1] Stumpf, Philosophy, p. 329.

[2] Ibid., p. 301. It was Hume who arrived at this position, building upon the theories of his predecessors, Berkeley and Locke.

In an attempt to achieve objectivity, Aristotle based his value-system on the objective order of nature. However, in so doing he introduced the problem of how to determine the good in a world permeated with evil. All attempts to establish ethics on purely empirical foundations exhibit a major logical flaw, namely, a confusion of the actual with the ideal. Few would admit that "whatever is, is right." Most people have a sense of the "ought" which stands in contrast with the "is." What ought to be is of a different logical type from what is. The search for moral foundations in human nature can succeed only if ideal concepts of man are admitted. For a truly humanistic ethic it is necessary to have a vision of what a person ought to become, or what a perfect human being should be like, and of the attributes of a really good man. These norms can never be derived from observing actual people.[1] Without an ideal norm, man is left only with the consensus--"everybody's doing it"--as the standard.

Furthermore, Plato and Aristotle both saw self-actualization as the goal for the good life--the fulfillment of the soul's destiny either in the next life or this one--with little mention of the need for self-sacrificing love for the benefit of others. While self-actualization--commonly called "fulfillment" today--is a worthy objective when combined with the ideal of service, by itself it becomes a selfish--even destructive--goal.[2]

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[1] Philip H. Phenix, "Ethics and the Will of God," in Moral Education, eds. Chazan and Soltis, pp. 56, 58.

[2] How many have abandoned family and social obligations in the interest of "self-fulfillment"!

Problems with anthropology

One of the questions of anthropology is whether man is good, evil, or "blank" at birth. Plato saw an inherent weakness in man derived from the irrational parts of the soul (spirit and appetite), augmented by the entrance of the soul into the body. He thus had a low opinion of man's physical nature with its sexual and nutritive appetites, at the same time regarding reason as the highest part of the soul, which alone could lead it back to its former exalted state. In succeeding centuries of the Christian era whenever Platonic influence was strong, the ascetic, contemplative life was regarded as the way to holiness, while there was a corresponding devaluation of marriage, family, the physical nature, and the physical world. The question arises as to whether Plato located sin and righteousness correctly--bodily appetites being sinful and reason being righteous. Is the physical nature basically evil? And is man's reason uncorrupted by evil?

Aristotle saw man as "blank" at birth, with the potentiality for good or evil in his nature. He too regarded reason as the kingly power which must rule over the appetitive parts of man's nature. (As a naturalistic philosopher, however, he differed from Plato by granting the physical nature and appetites their proper place in human life, to be enjoyed with moderation.) He saw the need to develop the potential for good within man, a concept that has had great appeal through the ages, climaxing in the unbounded optimism of the 19th and early 20th centuries regarding the perfectability of man. Such optimism has since been shattered by two world wars and their aftermath, giving place to a

deep pessimism about man and his future. The evil in human nature appears to be far more radical than the philosophers had suspected.

Another anthropological question debated through the centuries is whether man is a dualism of body and soul (mind), or a monism of either element. Plato accepted the former position, assigning all the categories of meaning--such as goodness, freedom, and transcendence--to the soul. Aristotle redefined "soul" to be merely the form that gives the body its purpose, thus coming close to reducing man to a physical monism, though he retained the categories of mind and freedom. By eliminating the dimensions of eternity, transcendence, and the supernatural, however, he initiated the process of reductionism that would eventually devaluate man to the level of the animal or machine.[2]

Related to the dualistic-monistic debate is the question of whether man is free or determined by nature. Man was generally regarded as free and undetermined until the Copernican Revolution, Newtonian physics, and the scientific method brought to light a mechanistic universe which appeared to engulf man in the machine. All of nature, including man as a physical being, appeared to be under the domination of law and causality. Personality and character were seen as determined by all of the causalities in heredity and environment that affected man's being.

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[1]Reinhold Niebuhr, "The Two Sources of Western Culture," in The Christian Idea of Education, ed. Edmund Fuller (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957), p. 250.

[2]Philosophical anthropologists have noted three insults inflicted upon man: the first, dealt by Copernicus, was cosmological and removed man's habitat from the center of the universe; the second, dealt by Darwin, was biological and removed man's origin from God to the beasts; the third, dealt by Freud, was psychological and removed man's moral freedom. See Skinner, Beyond Freedom, p. 211; H. O. Pappé, "Philosophical Anthropology," Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 5:160.

Rationalist philosophers made strenuous efforts to maintain the freedom of man but could not logically succeed. Descartes postulated a dualistic world of thought and extension (spirit and matter) in which the laws of physics applied only to matter. He tried to keep man's spirit free by denying any interaction between mind (which is free) and body (which is subject to causality) but was unable to maintain this dichotomy.[1] Kant proposed a similar dualism between the phenomenal and noumenal worlds, only the phenomenal--including man's physical self--being under the control of physics, whereas the noumenal--including man's mind--is free.[2] But Kant's inability to establish the existence of the noumenal world through speculative philosophy led to the denial of its existence, leaving as real only the phenomenal world of matter, rigidly subject to deterministic laws.

Cut loose from the noumenal world of ultimate meaning, and pressured by the suffocating mechanism of the physical world, philosophers continued their efforts to maintain the freedom of man. Since law and order in the universe seemed to create the machine, the apostles of freedom began to postulate a random universe without purpose and design. This view of reality, in which man is just a random collection of atoms, is compatible with hedonism: man who sees himself in a meaningless situation often reacts in abandonment to pleasure, in a disordered life, or in existential despair.

Rousseau revolted against the determinism and social order of his day by asserting the innate goodness of man and the goal of autonomous freedom. He believed that if laws were removed and the social

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[1]Young, Christian Approach to Philosophy, p. 118.

[2]Stumpf, Philosophy, p. 320.

order overthrown by revolution, man would pass into a reign of equality and justice.[1]

The atheistic existentialism of Sartre is another attempt to assert the freedom of man. Sartre postulates a meaningless universe in which man must find meaning by sheer force of will. His system recognizes no God, no objective system of values, no built-in essence or purpose, and especially, no determinism.[2] "Existence precedes essence," a key concept of existentialism, reverses the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle. By this is meant that there is no preexistent plan for man, no human nature or potential for him to actualize. Man is catapulted into existence as nothing, and must create his own character through exercise of the will, agonizing choice-making, and involvement with humanity. His anguish centers in the fact that since there is no God, there is no possibility of finding values or divine commands by which to legitimize his conduct.[3] Man as the arbiter of his own destiny must do his best with his limited judgment in a world that offers a terrifying degree of freedom.

Schools of philosophy and psychology opposed to the concept of freedom adhere to a deterministic view that reduces man from a conscious, creative, initiating self to "a series of states in a determinative causal chain"[4]—e.g., the philosophies of Hobbes and Spinoza

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[1]William J. Durant, The Story of Philosophy: The Lives and Opinions of the Great Philosophers of the Western World (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1961), p. 188.

[2]Stumpf, Philosophy, p. 469.

[3]Jean Paul Sartre, "Existentialism and Ethics," in Moral Education, eds. Chazan and Soltis, pp. 82, 85-86.

[4]Phenix, "Ethics and Will of God," pp. 60-61.

and the behavioristic psychology of Watson and Skinner. The psychology of behaviorism arose as a reaction to the dualistic concept of mind and body, which was considered more religious than scientific. Behaviorists see man as a monism, rejecting such terms as soul, mind, and consciousness as too subjective to permit scientific study.[1] They make both animal and human psychology the study of behavior, which is a physiological process based upon the physics and chemistry of the response of living tissue. Modifications of behavior are studied in terms of stimulus-response reaction.[2] Behaviorists believe that human actions and reactions can be determined completely so that accurate prediction is possible in terms of the stimulus-response formula. Thought is only sub-vocal speech.[3]

Dewey, influenced by Darwinian evolution, held a similar view of man, seeing him as a biological organism interacting with his environment. Thought is merely the solving of problem situations, the activity of the organism as it seeks to adjust itself to its environment.[4]

The question of freedom vs. determinism has serious implications for character theory. The deterministic view sees law without freedom. Though some find determinism attractive because it relieves man of personal and moral responsibility, for the same reason it makes

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[1]Skinner, Beyond Freedom, p. 10; Clyde J. Steckel, Theology and Ethics of Behavior Modification (Washington, D. C.: University Press of America, 1979), pp. 16-18.

[2]Gardner Murphy, Historical Introduction to Modern Psychology (New York: Harcourt, Brace, & World, 1949), pp. 253-260.

[3]Young, Christian Approach to Philosophy, p. 112.

[4]John Dewey, The Quest for Certainty (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1929), pp. 106-107.

the issue of character development irrelevant. If all reality is mechanically interlocked in a chain of cause-effect events over which one has no control, character development is not within one's control either. Strictly deterministic psychology sees "character" as formed by the environment through reinforcement. "Character" here is enclosed in quotation marks, for Skinner deliberately sets out to destroy the "prescientific" concept of "man qua man" and reduces him to the level of the animal.[1] Character assumes that man is a thinking, willing, choosing being who has a part in shaping his own development. Determinism destroys this concept of character.

The position of freedom without law is also inimical to the idea of character development, since it leads to the breakdown of social institutions and individual morality. Total freedom for the individual leads to chaos and anarchy. "Man come of age" is supposed to be able to make moral judgments without recourse to law and authority.[2] If he were totally good by nature, if he had the wisdom to see the far-reaching consequences of his choices, and if he had the will to act in harmony with his perceptions of right, the freedom ethic might work. But he would still be under the control of law—law imposed internally rather than externally.

Character development is contingent upon both freedom and law—the ability to make choices in a law-regulated cosmos and society.[3]

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[1]Skinner states, "It is often said that in [manipulating man] we must treat [him] as a mere animal. 'Animal' is a perjorative term, but only because 'man' has been made spuriously honorific" (Beyond Freedom, p. 201).

[2]Joseph Fletcher, Situation Ethics: The New Morality (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966), p. 153.

[3]The idea of law and order in the universe is actually not

Problems with character theory

Plato's theory of character development through the controlling power of reason appears highly commendable, though his assumption that reason is inherently good (evil deriving from the appetites and passions) appears to be unwarranted. Is it not likely that reason itself has been infected by evil and is capable of pursuing harmful ends? Plato's own practical applications of reason--his acceptance of homosexuality,[1] his proposal for a controlled society with genetic and psychological manipulation of the masses by the elite, his elimination of the family unit,[2] his low regard for man's physical nature (leading to generations of mental anguish over the issue of celibacy)--all are morally questionable.

Also subject to question is Plato's assumption that knowledge is virtue. Herein lies the weakness of modern cognitivist psychologies (which trace their ancestry through the rationalist philosophies back to Plato)--they assume that skill in moral reasoning leads to moral behavior.[3] Is it possible, however, that skill in moral reasoning could actually lead to the sophisticated rationalization of immoral behavior? Or could one know the moral thing to do, yet for reasons of

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contrary to the idea of man's freedom. The question is whether the universe is a closed or open system. According to the biblical view, God acts in harmony with the laws He set in operation, but has the freedom to contravene them when He wishes. Man also has freedom to act in harmony with or opposition to moral and natural law.

[1] In Plato's dialog, Phaedrus, Socrates discusses the proper and improper expressions of homosexuality, asserting that the former actually aids the soul in its return to heaven (251-252).

[2] I.e., for the guardian class. Stumpf, Philosophy, pp. 77-78.

[3] Lawrence Kohlberg, "Education for Justice: a Modern Statement of the Platonic View," in Moral Education, ed. T. R. Sizer (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970), p. 57.

self-interest fail to do it? Is this not a basic human problem?

Cognitivists Piaget and Kohlberg build their psychologies on Kant's concept of the structures (categories) of the mind, to which they add the evidence that these structures pass through developmental stages as the mind matures. Piaget identifies two moral stages--heteronomy and autonomy--while Kohlberg further distinguishes six sequential stages in the development of moral reasoning.[1] The cognitivists believe that the mind imposes its own order and structure on external data; the task of the moral educator, then, is to draw out in Socratic fashion what is already innate in the mind. Similarly, the proponents of "values clarification" seek by questioning to draw out of the student an expression of his own values.[2] The moral educators do not intend to teach fixed moral values but rather to stimulate the development of the structures of the mind. However, the mind must be taught content in order to restructure its views of reality. Data which is not possessed cannot be handled in the restructuring process.[3] Kohlberg does in fact teach values, however--the values of situation ethics. To score high on his "moral dilemmas" tests, one must accept the possibility of violating generally accepted moral principles (e.g., honesty or sexual purity) for the sake of protecting a higher principle (e.g., respect for life). Thus there are no absolute moral standards to guide in making moral decisions. Cognitive moral philosophy is highly subjective--the construct of the individual mind--as is the

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[1]Ronald Duska and Marieilen Whelan, Moral Development: a Guide to Piaget and Kohlberg (New York: Paulist Press, 1975), pp. 8, 45-47.

[2]Raths, Hermin, and Simon, Values and Teaching, p. 28.

[3]Lawrence O. Richards, A Theology of Christian Education (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975), p. 186.

philosophy of Plato himself.

Behaviorists, in the tradition of Aristotle, study man as a biological organism; further, they exclude all "mentalistic" concerns and focus only on behavior. Since they believe that behavior is always causally linked to events in the environment, their goal is to control behavior by managing the environment. The therapist uses aversive procedures (producing discomfort) to discourage deviant behavior, and operant procedures (producing pleasure) to encourage good behavior. Ethical therapy involves the cooperation of the client; treatment against a person's will is often called "brain-washing."[1] The motivation appealed to by behaviorists is avoidance of pain and desire for reward, considered by cognitive psychologists to be the lowest level of motivation. While behavior-modification techniques undoubtedly prove useful in the breaking and formation of habit patterns, it is questionable whether the resultant "good behavior" is equivalent to moral character. Skinner himself places it on a level with animal training.

By definition, behaviorist and cognitivist psychologies fail to touch man at the deepest levels of his personality, since they are concerned with a part of man instead of his whole being. The cognitivist is concerned only with reason; the behaviorist, focusing on externals, is even farther from the core of human personality. Neither psychology professes to deal with the spiritual nature of man, the seat of his deepest longings and highest aspirations. Neither comes to grips with what religionists call the sinful nature; the psychologists describe man's problem only in terms of immaturity and maladjustment. Not having diagnosed the radical nature of man's illness, they have no

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[1]Steckel, Ethics of Behavior Modification, pp. 18, 21-23, 79.

adequate remedy. Reason, habit-formation, the will--all have their place in character development, but they do not of themselves have power to alter the basic selfishness of human nature. While external morality may appear adequate for society's needs, it does not satisfy man at the deepest level of his being, nor does it suffice for acceptance with God. In Christ's evaluation the autonomous moral man is "wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked" (Rev 3:17). The only agent for character change is Christ Himself, who can overcome the sinful nature and satisfy the longings of the spiritual nature, thus restoring man to the image of God.

The student of Plato and Aristotle cannot but be impressed with their genius. The ideas they wrestled with have been the subject of two thousand years of dialectic by later philosophers whose contributions have been, according to Whitehead, "but a series of footnotes to Plato."[1] In their struggle to perceive truth these two men came tantalizingly close to discovering the nature of ultimate reality. Plato sensed a world of light beyond the darkness of the cave. Behind the multiplexity of the physical world he saw the unity of a great Mind imposing order on chaos. Aristotle reasoned the existence of a Prime Mover who must cause all motion and change. But neither philosopher was able to discover by his own rational powers the infinite, personal God who created man in His image for fellowship with Himself. This piece of knowledge has been the missing keystone in the structures of humanistic philosophy, without which each inevitably crumbles.

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[1] If the Jews of the dispersion had Judaized the Greek world instead of being Hellenized by it, these great philosophers might have found the keystone of the arch, and the history of civilization might have been different!

Unaided human reason has driven philosophers into one cul-de-sac after another, such as the following:

1. the denial of the existence of the material world (a position of complete subjectivism)

2. the denial of the existence of mind (a position of complete objectivism)

3. the denial of law, order, and structure in the universe, with the positing of a random universe

4. the denial of "essence" or purpose for man

5. the denial of human freedom, with the positing of a machine universe of which man is a part

6. the denial of any objective basis for determining values or distinguishing right from wrong

7. the denial of the sinfulness of human nature, with the resultant denial of its remedy

8. the denial of God and the supernatural, with the corresponding loss of all the categories that give ultimate meaning to life.

Thus man, with his own rational powers unaided by divine revelation, ultimately destroys himself.

Apocalyptic Solutions to Philosophical Dilemmas

The Apocalyptic[1] world-view avoids the dilemmas of the philosophers, though its solutions are not readily acceptable to human reason.

Apocalyptic epistemology is based upon divine revelation--God communicating to the prophet through visions and angel-messengers the knowledge of the origin and destiny of man and his world. This

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[1] In the upper case it means "pertaining to the Apocalypse" (see p. 15).

revelation is reasonable, yet transcends reason, requiring faith in the presupposition that there is a supernatural God who has revealed Himself to man through His mighty acts of creation and redemption. The presupposition of an omnipotent, personal God who created and superintends the cosmos explains the order and design in the universe (the "machine" feared by the secularists), the correlation of the structures of the mind within and the moral order without, and the aspirations of man for goodness and eternity.

Apocalyptic axiology is rooted in the character of God as revealed to man through the Word of God, the ten-commandment moral law, and the life of Christ who is God in human flesh. Jesus Christ, the only perfect specimen of humanity, is the ideal for which philosophers searched in vain. He is the only human being whose character is a perfect pattern to emulate. The Apocalypse is built upon moral absolutes which not only guide but judge the lives of men.

Apocalyptic anthropology describes man as a being created in the image of God for the purpose of fellowship with God. As a free moral agent he has the capacity to submit to the lordship of Christ or to revolt against it. The fundamental expression of evil character in man is the worship of self and false gods, accompanied by rebellion against God. Conversely, the fundamental expression of transformed character is the humbling of self and the exaltation and adoration of God, resulting in faithfulness and loyalty to Him. Man apart from God is mortal; through union with God he may become immortal.

According to the Apocalypse, man develops a righteous character not by moral reasoning or behavioral conditioning but through union with God. Righteous character is both man's <u>obtainment</u> from God and

his attainment through the help of God. Christ's death provides both forgiveness for sin and experiential victory over sin. While He graciously bestows the gift of a perfect standing with God, the response of the believer is to live a life of ethical obedience to God through oneness with Him. This oneness is effected by beholding Christ's holiness and one's own contrasting unworthiness, by repenting of sin, cherishing the Word, reserving time for the devotional life with Christ, worshiping and praising Him, and witnessing to others of His saving power. When the union with Christ is maintained the believer does not fear death or love his own life, but is able to endure the most extreme tests by suffering and even dying for Christ. The ultimate evidence of righteous character is this total loyalty to Christ. The reward for righteous character is a victorious life with God here and hereafter, while the punishment for rebellion is exclusion from life with God.

Thus the Apocalyptic world-view accords great meaning to human existence, great worth to human life, great responsibility for human choice, and great importance to human character.

Educational Implications

For two millennia the education of the West has drawn largely from its two taproots, the Judaeo-Christian and the Graeco-Roman, marked by periods of synthesis and antithesis, accommodation and separation. Augustine's synthesis of Neoplatonism with Christianity resulted in an "other-worldly" view of life, causing Western civilization to experience a period of decline in the arts and sciences that led to "the Dark Ages." With the thirteenth-century recovery of Aristotle and a "this-worldly" view of life there came a revival of the

arts and sciences leading to "Renaissance," "Enlightenment," and unparalleled scientific progress--accompanied by a gradual withering of the Judaeo-Christian taproot. As reason gained the ascendancy, faith declined, ushering in such existential despair as to constitute this century a spiritual "Dark Age."[1]

For decades American education retained the fruits of the Judaeo-Christian heritage (though the root had died) masking the full impact of unadulterated secular humanism. In this decade, however, the last remnants are disappearing, yielding the dominant position to secular humanism.

Since, in the process of philosophical dialectic, man has suffered the loss of immortality, "essence," "freedom and dignity," and even mind, it follows that a reductionist view of man would lead to a reduction of educational expectations and goals for him. Following are some common educational assumptions of this century as they affect the typical student, here called (in memory of Rousseau's famous paragon) "Émile." (These assumptions are not all consistent with each other, deriving from different schools of thought; hence they are introduced with the word "if.")

If Émile is an evolving organism interacting with his environment in the struggle for survival, then adjustment to the environment (physical and social) is the greatest task of education.

If all of Émile's existence is confined to the "three-score years and ten" of this life, his goals consist in acquiring the skills needed to provide him with the basic necessities of life--food,

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[1]William G. Pollard, "Dark Age and Renaissance in the Twentieth Century," in Christian Idea of Education, p. 8.

shelter, clothing, and household furnishings.[1]

If thinking is only a problem-solving mechanism which comes into action when the organism finds itself in a difficult situation, Émile's task is to obtain the skills necessary to respond innovatively to his constantly changing environment. For him education does not involve the transmission of a cultural or religious heritage or a specified body of knowledge--hence the traditional curriculum can be discarded.[2] Basic skills (e.g., reading, writing, and ciphering) are taught only as a by-product of problem-solving to meet a felt need.

If "mind" is not a recognized category of Émile's personality, then learning for him should be defined strictly in terms of "behavioral objectives" consisting of specific, measurable, segmented tasks for him to perform.

If all of reality is contained in the material cosmos, then Émile's primary field of study is the science and technology of the physical world.

If Émile's responses are totally determined by environmental factors, he cannot be held accountable for his behavior, whether it is conforming or deviant. It is the responsibility of the society (home, school, and community) to socialize or resocialize him by appropriate reinforcement techniques.

If Émile is born basically good or "blank," he should be allowed to grow naturally with as little repression or control as possible.

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[1] John Dewey considered these the primary essentials of the curriculum. Democracy and Education (New York: Macmillan, 1916), p. 223.

[2] Robert R. Rusk and James Scotland, Doctrines of the Great Educators (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979), pp. 225, 231.

If there are no fixed moral principles, Émile should be stimulated to reason out his own solutions to moral problems, and to determine his own values. He should resist the notion of conformity to absolute standards such as may be held by his parents or church.

The news media reveal that Émile (the typical public school student) is in trouble today--and a growing segment of American society thinks it knows the reason why. Christian parents and educators are linking the ills of public education to the secular-humanistic assumptions that underlie it. They associate classroom chaos with permissiveness in discipline. They see school vandalism, violence and rape, illegitimate births, rampant V.D., teen-age drinking, lying, cheating, and dishonesty as caused by the teaching of situation ethics and the elimination of moral absolutes. They feel that nationally lower S.A.T. scores and the "Johnny can't read" (or write, or cipher) phenomenon are directly traceable to the erosion of the traditional curriculum and the lowered academic standards that accompanied the goal of "adjustment to society." They see a connection between the greed of American society (e.g., the constant demand for higher wages with less work) and the humanistic goal of self-fulfillment. They associate irresponsibility, apathy, and lack of motivation ("if our work gets hard, we quit; if our marriage gets difficult, we divorce; . . . if school is dull, we drop out") with the educational assumption that learning must be fun, exciting, and easy.[1] It seems to them that the public education system has failed to reach even its limited goals of

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[1]See Reo M. Christenson, "Clarifying 'Values Clarification' for the Innocent," pp. 37-38; and Bill Freeman, "How I Slid into Education's Permissive Pit and Climbed Out Again," pp. 40-42 in Christianity Today (April 10, 1981).

social adjustment and self-actualization. They sense such a strong need for the traditional values of the Judaeo-Christian heritage that they are taking their children out of public schools and enrolling them in independent Christian schools.[1]

What difference do philosophical assumptions make in the practice of education? If the Apocalyptic world-view is assumed to be true, then educational goals and practice will be radically different from those of secular education. Here, in contrast to the student in the secular system—Émile, is posited the student in the Christian system—"Christine." Following are educational presuppositions derived from the Apocalypse with their applications to "Christine."

Since Christine is created in the image of God, likeness to Him in character is the primary educational goal (Rev 22:4).

Since Christine has the potential of living for eternity (22:5), education should prepare her not only for this life, but also for the life to come. Her life has eternal consequences, not only for herself, but for those touched by her influence.

Since Christine is a sinner with a potentially destructive selfish nature underlying her desires for goodness, she needs firm, consistent discipline expressed in love (3:19). The goal of home, school, and church education should be to make her aware of her sinful state and to bring her to repentance (2:4) and conversion.

Since Christine is a free moral agent, she is accountable to God for her attitudes and behavior (2:23c). In this life and in the judgment of the last day she will reap the consequences of her deeds

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[1]Kenneth M. Pierce, "A Case for Moral Absolutes," Time (June 8, 1981), pp. 54-56.

(3:5; 20:12). Though God takes environment into account (2:13), requiring less of some than of others (v. 24), He holds all accountable for their response to Jesus Christ (2:4-5).

Since Christine is a sinner, she needs to understand that Christ has already won the victory for her over sin and Satan (12:10-11; 1:5) and that her personal struggle with sin always begins from this vantage point of victory. In Christ she stands free from the defeating power of guilt, having the assurance of forgiveness and acceptance with God through the blood of Christ (1:5).

To nurture her relationship with God, Christine needs to be taught how to have a personal, devotional life with Christ. She can early be introduced to the concept of Christ knocking at the door of her heart, asking for a leisurely time of fellowship at the spiritual banquet He has in store (3:20). The Word of God must take central place in her devotional life and in the school curriculum. She should hear it read frequently and commit portions of it to memory (1:3). She should learn how to study the Bible as a primary source (using the inductive method) in addition to approaching it through secondary sources.

Since worship is the highest activity in which Christine will engage both in this life and the next (7:9-12), she needs to participate in this exalted experience, especially through the music of praise (5:9). She should approach God with both awe (fear, 1:17) and love (note the intimacy of 3:20)--either without the other being a distortion.

As a person created in the image of God, Christine has a mind with creative capacity and unlimited potential for development.

Intellectual goals for her should be set high. Mastery of the basic skills of reading, writing, and arithmetic should be foundational to other learning. Christine's field of study is as broad as creation, since the physical world was created by God for the benefit of mankind. The arts and sciences thus have a legitimate place in the Christian curriculum. Her education should include the physical, chemical, and life sciences as well as the arts, so that she may understand and appreciate the ways and works of God.

The arts as expressions of human creativity to glorify the Creator should be open to Christine, especially music--both instrumental and vocal--since it plays a vital role in the praise and worship of God (4:8-11; 5:8-10; 14:1-3; 15:2-3). Christine's education should include both the appreciation and performance of music. To develop her musical tastes, her environment from earliest years should be saturated with the best in music--i.e., music that derived its inspiration from God, the Bible, and nature.

The literary form of the Apocalypse--its drama, poetry, prose, imagery, fantasy, and even its horror and sublimity--suggests that varied forms of literature are suitable for the Christian curriculum. At the proper developmental level, Christine may be introduced to Christian fantasy (e.g., Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress or Lewis's Narnia Tales) which is valuable because of its vivid portrayal of the spiritual forces working for man's salvation or destruction. The content of the Apocalypse suggests that the criterion for judging literature should be its moral purpose, which should be to glorify God and overcome evil.

The dualism of the Apocalypse is a reminder that everything

human--including the arts and sciences--has been employed by the forces of good and evil for the uplifting or degradation of man. Hence Christine needs to be taught to discriminate between good and evil, truth and error. In her science classes she should be exposed to evolution as well as creation--from the Christian viewpoint. With regard to music, art, and literature, the curriculum should employ a two-fold strategy—saturation with the best expressions, and the formulation of criteria for evaluating what is acceptable and what is not. Since all art forms, concrete or abstract, make statements about life, an effort should be made to determine the underlying philosophy of the artist. This can then be evaluated in terms of the Christian world-view. Christine, living in a world of good and evil, would thus be led to value the good and resist--yet understand--the evil.

The Apocalypse presents two great acts of God that give meaning to human existence: creation (4:11) and redemption (1:5; 5:9, 12; 7:14; 12:10) with overwhelming emphasis on the latter. This implies that Christine is free to choose a career in any area related to creation or redemption--yet her purpose must always relate to redemption. Whether her career is religious or secular, she must always be a "witness" to those within her circle of influence regarding God's redemptive plan for this world (1:9; 11:3; 12:17; 14:6).

To communicate the gospel to the world requires twofold preparation: familiarity with the message to be communicated ("the word of God and the testimony of Jesus") and with the culture to be addressed. Today the professional missionary studies the language, culture, history, religion, and world-view of the country he is preparing to serve to be able to diagnose the ills that afflict it and to

find in its culture "hooks to hang the gospel on." He communicates the gospel in thought-patterns intelligible to the people. Christine faces a task of equal magnitude. Contemporary Western culture has moved so far from its Judaeo-Christian moorings as to become an alien culture, unintelligible to most Christians. Few can communicate with the modern secular man. This is because traditional Christian education concentrates on the Judaeo-Christian taproot of our culture, with little exposure to the Graeco-Roman.

The apostle John set a worthy example as a communicator. Though steeped in his own Judaeo-Christian heritage, he was familiar with the Graeco-Roman culture and dialoged with it, using its own thought-patterns to explain the gospel (e.g., he introduced Jesus as the Logos [Jn 1:1; Rev 19:13], a Stoic concept for God:[1] he addressed the Gnostic concept of light and darkness [Jn 1:4-5; 8:12];[2] he drew his symbols of stars and mountains, beasts and dragons, from the pagan world).

Christine urgently needs to understand the secular world around her--with its rock music, eastern cults, drug culture, occultism, and sexual promiscuity, replete with existential despair--in order to evaluate it, resist the evils of it, and at the same time speak to it. To understand contemporary Western culture she needs to trace back its roots through the Graeco-Roman stream. It seems necessary, then, that Christian schools dialog more with the contemporary culture. The question of evolution should be addressed from the elementary level

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[1] See William Barclay, The Gospel of John, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1975) 1:34-37 for an excellent discussion of the Logos.

[2] Ladd, Theology of NT, pp. 224, 232-235.

onward, with ethics and values also receiving early treatment, increasing through the adolescent years. History should receive more emphasis; and the history of ideas might well be introduced at the secondary level, with further treatment during the college years. Christian authors who have spoken to the secular world (e.g., Francis Schaeffer and C. S. Lewis) should be studied. Christian curriculum designers who include Christian witnessing as an objective should—out of pity for the world—provide their students with adequate preparation to communicate with it.

Patient endurance, self-sacrifice, and service are values strongly emphasized by the Revelator. Since mental and spiritual endurance are founded upon sound physical health, Christine should be trained for physical fitness and stamina—the hard rather than the soft life. The beloved apostle himself was a vigorous man, enduring torture, then the rigors of exile on rugged Patmos coupled with great literary activity—even in his ninth decade. As a circuit preacher to the seven churches, traveling the post roads of Asia Minor on horseback, he was an outdoorsman with a strong constitution. (History even records that the aged apostle pursued a bandit at high speed through the mountains until he overcame him and led him to Christ.)[1]

Since the Apocalypse not only reflects but also enlarges upon the New Testament ethic of poverty (e.g., Mt 6:19, 24; 16:24-26; Mk 10:21; Lk 6:20-25; Jas 5:1-6; Rev 2:9)[2]—depicting sacrifice,

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[1]Clement of Alexandria, "What Rich Man Can Be Saved?" in ANF 2:603-604.

[2]David Murchie, "The New Testament View of Wealth Accumulation," Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society 21 (Dec. 1978):335-344.

suffering, and possible martyrdom as normative for the Christian (Rev 1:9; 2:9-10; 12:11)--Christine should not be educated for a life of ease and prosperity (viewed with alarm in the Apocalypse [3:1, 17]) but for service, self-discipline, hardship, and sacrifice. If she comes from an affluent family, special care should be taken to expose her to the Apocalyptic perspective of the world--its famines, wars, degradation, and poverty--to inspire her to ideals of service. Beginning with helpfulness in the classroom, she might be encouraged to reach out to the lonely in nursing homes, the chronically ill in rehabilitation centers, the underprivileged in the inner city. During her college years she would benefit from service as a student missionary or as a volunteer worker in one of the world's refugee camps. Such experience in her student years might not only clarify her career goals but inspire her to a high level of scholastic achievement. For the strongest motivation for excellence is not the desire for self-fulfillment, but the longing to be of service in a cause greater than oneself.

Émile and Christine stand in the spotlight of the educational world today, each representing a different world-view. One is perceived as a biological organism struggling for survival, the other as the crowning work of creation. One is taught to adjust to the environment, the other to relate to God. One is expected to have finite aspirations, the other to aspire to eternal life. One is challenged to amass goods, the other to win souls. One is seen as the pawn of circumstances without responsibility for his acts, the other as an initiator of action with full accountability for its results. One is expected to make moral decisions on the basis of his own subjective

judgment, the other on the basis of the revealed will of God. One is taught the ideal of autonomy, the other of dependence upon God. One is challenged to seek meaning in self-fulfillment, the other in self-sacrifice. One is expected to find highest value in the preservation of life, the other in loyalty to God to the point of suffering and death.

Which one will have clear perceptions of the meaning of life? Which one will pass on to posterity the values of honesty, industry, altruistic service, fidelity in marriage, respect for the rights of others, for property, and for authority—all so necessary for the preservation of society? Which one will succeed in the awesome task of developing a character that will stand the crises of the future?

This research concludes that it is only in the framework of the God-man relationship that man can find his identity, his origin and destiny, his malady and its remedy, his values, his mission in life, and the fullest development of a character designed to reflect the character of God. This is the concept of character in the Apocalypse.

Recommendations for Further Study

This research suggests that certain areas, both in education and theology, could profitably be studied in further detail.

1. Since the "Project for Studies in Character Development" at Andrews University has as a major objective the formulation of a theory of character development based upon the teachings of the Bible, it is recommended that other portions of the Bible—such as the Pentateuch, hagiographa, prophets, synoptic gospels, Gospel of John, and Pauline epistles—be researched for their particular contributions to the subject of character.

2. Since this research has pointed out some of the radically different assumptions underlying Christian and secular education, it is recommended that Christian educators critically examine the philosophical presuppositions of secular theories and practices (e.g., progressive education, behavior modification, sensitivity training, values clarification, Kohlberg's moral reasoning) to determine whether they are compatible with biblical truth. Should such theories be adopted, modified, or discarded by Christian schools?

3. It has been noted that little has been written on the theology of the Apocalypse (p. 23). Though this study has attempted to systematize the anthropology, theology (character of God), hamartiology, soteriology, and eschatology of the book--with a partial treatment of Christology and ecclesiology and very little pneumatology—it is recommended that these areas, especially the last three, be researched at greater depth.

4. This research indicates that a fruitful field for further study is the nature of the heavenly sanctuary, its relationship to the earthly church, the judgment issuing from the sanctuary, the stages or phases of judgment, the time setting for the various phases of judgment, and their relationship to judgment in the book of Daniel.

5. Scholars have noted similar themes and motifs in the books of John and Revelation such as witness, life, judgment, and water, to which this research has added the "I-will-come-to-you" motif (Jn 14 and Rev 2-3), inaugurated eschatology (eternal life now and saints-in-heaven now), and the emphasis upon union with God. These parallels suggest that a comparative theology of John's gospel and apocalypse would be a rewarding study.

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